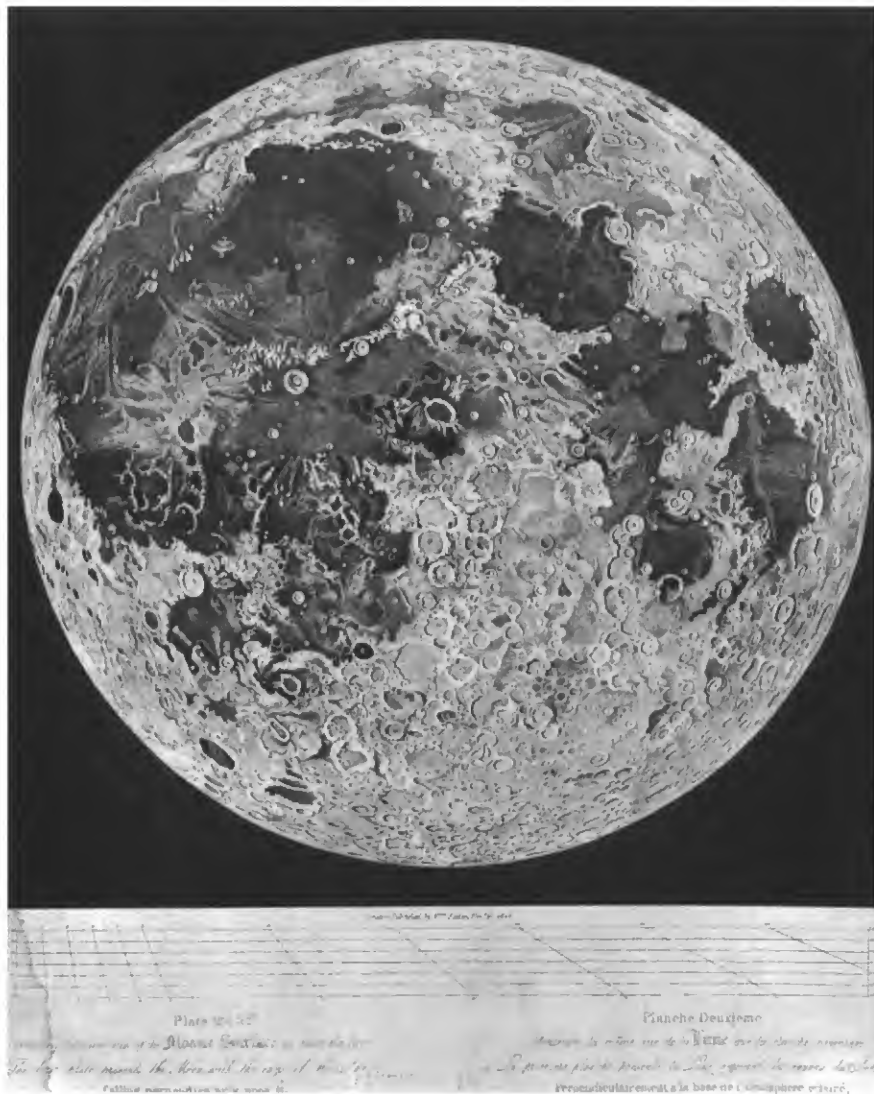


CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH: *MOONWATCHERS*



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

CASPAR *DAVID FRIEDRICH*:
MOONWATCHERS



John Russell. *Map of the Moon with Topography*, 1805. Engraving, approx. 30 × 20 in. (76.2 × 50.8 cm). Photograph courtesy of Ewen A. Whitaker, Tucson

CASPAR *DAVID* FRIEDRICH:
MOONWATCHERS



SABINE REWALD

WITH AN ESSAY BY KASPER MONRAD

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

"Caspar David Friedrich: Moonwatchers" celebrates the recent acquisition by the Metropolitan Museum of its first painting by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840). *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (ca. 1830), purchased with funds provided by Mrs. Jayne Wrightsman, is one of three variations that Friedrich made on one of his most recognizable and characteristic motifs. So that the subtle differences among the three canvases might be studied in situ, Gary Tinterow, Engelhard Curator of Nineteenth-Century European Paintings, had the felicitous idea of uniting all three versions for the first time. He asked Sabine Rewald, associate curator in the Department of Modern Art, to serve as co-curator for the project.

The resultant "dossier" exhibition features additional works by Friedrich himself, as well as some by his Dresden friends, among them Carl Gustav Carus, Johan Christian Dahl, Christian Friedrich Gille, and August Heinrich. The criterion for inclusion of the other artists' works alongside Friedrich's famous trio of "moonwatchers" was that they depict the moon—although concessions have been made for a few setting suns. These tributes to the moon were part of a phenomenon that Rewald describes in her essay as a "lunar period" in German poetry, literature, and philosophy. She finds that the symbolic trajectory of the moon from early to late Romanticism—from emblem of forlorn yearning to pleasing source of serenity to mere astronomical fact, drained of emotion—is reflected in no less an oeuvre than Goethe's.

The realization of this project was entirely dependent on the cooperation of our colleagues

in both Dresden and Berlin, where the other two versions of Friedrich's painting reside. I wish to thank Ulrich Bischoff, director of the Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, for entrusting to us the famous, nocturnal *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (1819). Likewise, we are indebted to Peter-Klaus Schuster, general director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and director of the Nationalgalerie, for lending the equally famous *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (ca. 1824), together with the artist's pendant paintings of 1822, *The Solitary Tree* and *Moonrise over the Sea*. I would also like to thank Kasper Monrad, senior research curator at the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, and a great friend of the Metropolitan Museum, for his thought-provoking essay, in which he proposes an alternate chronology for the three pictures.

The Museum extends its sincere thanks to Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen for their generous support of this exhibition. We are also indebted to the generosity of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making this publication possible.

Ten years ago, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago mounted the first Friedrich exhibition in this country, which consisted of works from both the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg and the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow. Unlike that earlier exhibition, which presented a small, yet broad, overview of the artist's career, "Caspar David Friedrich: Moonwatchers" offers the rare opportunity to view a single aspect of Friedrich's oeuvre in sharp focus: his exceptional treatment of his spectral friend, the moon.

Philippe de Montebello

Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the institutions and individuals who responded generously with loans to this small exhibition. Philippe de Montebello has already acknowledged the directors of the Dresden and Berlin museums, whose loans of two versions of Friedrich's famous "moonwatchers" made this exhibition possible in the first place. We are indebted as well to the following other lenders: Mikhail Piotrovsky, State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg; Wolfgang Holler, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Ingrid Mössinger, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz; Charles E. Pierce Jr., The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Harry S. Parker III, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; and Earl A. Powell III, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Special thanks are also due to Armin Kunz of Artemis Fine Arts, Inc., in New York; to Ewen A. Whitaker of Tucson; and especially to Eugene Victor Thaw of New York, whose interest and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

At the Metropolitan Museum many have contributed to this project. We thank Philippe de Montebello; Mahrukh Tarapor, Associate Director for Exhibitions; William S. Lieberman, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Chairman of the Department of Modern Art; Everett Fahy, John Pope-Hennessy Chairman of the Department of European Paintings; Linda M. Sylling, Manager for Special Exhibitions and Gallery Installations; Anne Moore Goslin, Assistant Registrar; Sian Wetherill, Assistant for Exhibitions in the Director's Office; Kenneth Soehner, Arthur K. Watson Chief Librarian; George Bisacca, Conservator in the Department of Paintings Conservation; and Rachel Mustalish

and Akiko Yamazaki-Kleps, Assistant Conservators in the Department of Paper Conservation. We also thank Jeffrey L. Daly for the exhibition design, Constance Norkin for graphic design, and Zack Zanolli for lighting design. In the Editorial Department, John P. O'Neill expertly oversaw the preparation of this modest publication, which gained from the keenly intelligent editing of Jennifer Bernstein, an elegant design by Robert Weisberg, and the savvy production supervision of Elisa Frohlich.

Sabine Rewald is deeply indebted to colleagues and friends for answering questions, securing photographs, and reading the manuscript of her essay. She gratefully acknowledges Helmut Börsch-Supan, Werner Busch, Magdalena Dabrowski, Carolyn DeLuca, Mathias Hans, David Harvey, Claude Keisch, Gode Krämer, Petra Kuhlmann-Hodig, Armin Kunz, David Lachenmann, Dominique Lobstein, Dorothy Mahon, Lisa M. Messinger, Hans-Jürgen Moesch, Kasper Monrad, Lynn Federle Orr, Christiane Gräfin zu Rantzau, Andreas Rumbler, Peter-Klaus Schuster, Stephen Soter, Patricia P. Tang, Birgit Verwiebe, Gregor J. M. Weber, and Ewen A. Whitaker. Jutta and Gottfried Spiegler shed light on Otto Friedrich Rosenberg, Friedrich's physician and the first owner of the Metropolitan Museum's recently acquired painting by the artist, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*. Gerd Spitzer, curator at the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, generously supplied further information about Dr. Rosenberg's background and answered with good humor unending queries related to works by Friedrich and his Dresden friends.

Sabine Rewald

Associate Curator, Department of Modern Art

Gary Tinterow

*Engelhard Curator of Nineteenth-Century
European Paintings*

NOTE TO THE READER

The dimensions of works in this volume are given in inches followed by centimeters. Height precedes width. In the catalogue entries, German titles are provided only for works by German artists. In both

essays and in the catalogue entries, references to the catalogue raisonné by Helmut Börsch-Supan and Karl Wilhelm Jähnig (see bibliography on p. 56) are abbreviated as CDF 1973.



MOONWATCHERS

SABINE REWALD

The German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) thought his many moonlit pictures would bring him, after his death, “to the moon” instead of to “the beyond”—or so he told visitors to his Dresden studio in April 1820.¹

What, then, was known about the moon in Friedrich’s lifetime? In Dresden, where the painter lived, the surveyor and cartographer Wilhelm Lohrmann (1796–1840) published in 1824 the first four sections of a planned twenty-five-section map of the moon, which offered in most accurate detail all the known features of the moon.² Astronomy textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and atlases of the moon had been proliferating since the telescope was invented in about 1608, and since Galileo first published his engravings of the waxing and waning moon in 1610. The maps they contained—often of great artistic beauty—were created by diverse moonwatchers in several countries: a lawyer, a telescope maker, and a Jesuit in Naples; a theologian-mathematician-philosopher and a Capuchin friar in Paris; a distinguished Dutch physicist; and a member of a prominent Flemish globe- and map-making family.³ By the end of the eighteenth century, telescopes with more advanced features had become more widely available, and moonwatchers armed with them further improved upon existing moon maps. The English artist

John Russell (1745–1806) published in 1805 an engraved image of the full moon that at the time was unsurpassed in beauty and general accuracy (see frontispiece). Between 1834 and 1837, two contemporaries of Friedrich’s, the astronomer Johann Heinrich von Mädler (1794–1874) and his friend Wilhelm Beer (1797–1850), created with typical German thoroughness *the* monument to the moon: a four-part map of its topography (see fig. 1) and a prodigious book, *The Moon* (*Der Mond*), which contained in its four hundred pages of small print all that was then known about the moon.⁴

These maps far surpassed in detail the first photographs of the moon, taken in 1840, which did not reveal anything more than the naked eye could see. The moon in these early photographs does not look so different from that on display in *The Crucifixion* (ca. 1430), by the Netherlandish master Jan van Eyck and his workshop, in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The beautifully observed waning, gibbous moon hangs like a broken, pale coin on the far right of the image (see fig. 2). This is supposed to be the first moon in Western painting.⁵ Two hundred years later, concurrently with the zealous mapping of the moon described above, seventeenth-century Dutch painters showed off their virtuosity in depicting reflections and light effects in their



Figure 1. A globe of the moon, nineteen feet in diameter, made in 1850 by Th. Dickert in Bonn, with a plaster surface modeled after Mädler's moon map. Photograph courtesy of Ewen A. Whitaker, Tucson

numerous night scenes with full moons. In these works, the full moon acts as an evocative searchlight in the dark sky. It does not yet elicit contemplation or yearning, as it would from the nineteenth-century German Romantics. While Friedrich studied in Copenhagen from 1794 to 1798, he might have seen moonlit scenes by his teacher, the Danish painter Jens Juel (1745–1802). The latter's *The Crossing at Snoghøj, Lillebælt: Moonrise* of 1787 (fig. 3) drew on seventeenth-century Dutch sources. And in Dresden, Friedrich would certainly have seen the pair of moonlit scenes by the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Aert van der Neer (1603–1677) that were on view in the galleries of the Gemäldegalerie at the time (see fig. 4).⁶

Friedrich's infatuation with the moon was part of what one might call a "lunar period" in German poetry, literature, and philosophy. Moonlight had long been associated in folktales and myths with "the night side of things"—magic, emotions, the semiconscious, the feminine and fertile—yet also with the sick, the ghostly, and the realm of the dead.⁷ Nearly every geographical region in Germany had different remedies and rules for farming, healing, avoiding bad luck, and soliciting love during the various phases of the moon, filling numerous booklets on the subject.⁸ The German Romantic poets rarely responded to or addressed the moon in the sky, but instead focused on its contour-melting, otherworldly effects in nature. The craze for the

moon in poetry took off in the mid-eighteenth century with such now little-read lyrical poets as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803),⁹ who was among the first to address the moon as dear friend and consoler. Instead of describing the optical effects of moonlight on the landscape, as in earlier poetry and as paralleled in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, Klopstock saw in moonlit nature a mirror of his own melancholic state of mind. One generation later, Joseph von Eichendorff (1788–1857) wrote that during a moonlit night his “soul opened its wings wide to fly home through hushed nature.”¹⁰ The poet and fabulist Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) experienced “moonlight sucking on my love-torn heart, and yearning gnawing itself deeper and deeper into it,” yet his senses were also “captivated by the magic of a moonlit night.”¹¹ The poet Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) waited for “the benevolent tears of the moon to heal night’s hidden sorrows for peace to reign.”¹²

The oeuvre of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) illustrates most vividly the changing role of the moon in poetry from early to late Romanticism: from symbol of yearning and despair, to source of serene contemplation, to eventual demystification under the Italian sky and through the telescope.¹³ Prior to that demystification, the most violent and haunting description of a moonlit night occurs in Goethe’s epistolary autobiographical novel of 1774, *The Sufferings of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werther*), in which a roaring storm during a full moon reflects the turmoil within the suicidal hero.¹⁴ Goethe then distanced himself from the excesses of his youthful swooning and yearning. His 1778 poem “To the Moon” (“An den Mond”), written for his adored friend Charlotte von Stein, describes his serenity during their shared walks through the moonlit valley of the river Ilm, near Weimar.¹⁵ Influenced by the classicism he encountered in Italy, the drawings Goethe created during his Italian voyage of 1786–88 feature a brighter and larger moon that bathes the landscape in a more objective light, nearly

approaching daylight. This new objectivity parallels Goethe’s scientific examination of the moon when he finally views it through a telescope in his garden in Weimar. In diary notations of 1799 and 1800 that he labeled “Observationes lunae,” Goethe describes his “at last closer acquaintance with this beloved and admired neighbor” through the telescope, thereby finally demystifying it.¹⁶

Goethe, Germany’s greatest poet, and Caspar David Friedrich, Germany’s greatest Romantic painter, had a falling out after the poet asked the painter in 1816 to draw some clouds to illustrate his meteorological studies.¹⁷ Goethe’s request had been innocent enough; he was unaware how much the sky meant to the painter. Shocked, Friedrich indignantly refused this request as verging on the sacrilegious. For Friedrich, the sky, with its ever-changing, mysterious light, was a divine phenomenon. Accordingly, in his own paintings he liked to wrap the landscape in a distinctly mysterious light. Friedrich rarely depicted daylight, and never sunlight if he could help it. Only light as it appears by night, at dusk or dawn, sunrise or sunset, in fog or mist, was shown in his paintings. By enveloping his motifs in this mysterious light, Friedrich achieved the “estrangement effect” espoused by the German Romantic poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg; 1772–1801), who wrote that “by giving the commonplace higher meaning—the familiar an enigmatic look, the finite the appearance of the infinite—I make it *Romantic*.”¹⁸



Figure 2. Jan van Eyck and Assistant. *The Crucifixion* (one of two panels; detail), ca. 1430. Oil on canvas, transferred from wood; 22¼ × 7¾ in. (56.5 × 19.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1933 (33.92a)

Friedrich revealed his at times arbitrary manipulation of natural phenomena in the three variations on his famous theme of two figures contemplating the moon (see cat. nos. 1–3). If in the first version the moon floats in a night sky, in the two other variants that moon floats in the same landscape in the exact same position during the same season, but now at early dusk. The history of the first version, in the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, has been documented since Friedrich painted it and shortly thereafter gave it to his friend the Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl (1788–1857). The histories of the other two versions have been less well documented. The whereabouts until 1922 of the second version, today in the collection of the Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, are unknown, while the interesting history of the third version, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, had also been unknown until now.

★ ★ ★

Friedrich's landscapes usually adhere to a severe underlying symmetry. They are also relatively empty. The Dresden picture of 1819, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (cat. no. 1), is therefore unusual. The composition is asymmetrical, and the landscape is relatively crowded. Symbol-laden elements that to modern eyes evoke theatrical props, such as an evergreen fir tree, a dead oak, a rock, and a large broken-off branch, line the winding forest path. This nocturnal *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* is the most dramatic and best known of the three variants. It is also one of the artist's most often reproduced and cited pictures. The wildly diverging interpretations accorded to this small painting—pagan, nature-mystical, political, or exclusively Christian—tend to obliterate its simple, yet deeply contemplative, mood.¹⁹ The two men rest on their evening walk through an imaginary, late-autumnal forest and admire the magical light of the setting moon, which floats like a vision in the night sky. They are seen from the back so that the viewer can

identify with their communion with nature, in which the Romantics saw a manifestation of the sublime. Friedrich's figures never look up at the sky, as curious stargazers do. They either look straight ahead, or, as here, where their high vantage point places them slightly above the moon, they look down, which accentuates their state of introspection. In an essay on pure perception, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), a contemporary of Friedrich's, seems to describe the mood of this painting. He writes: "Why has looking at the moon become so beneficiary, so soothing and so sublime? Because the moon remains purely an object for contemplation, not of the will." Schopenhauer then cites Goethe's poetic lines: "We do not desire the stars, we delight only in their splendor." And then he continues: "Furthermore, the moon is *sublime*, and moves us sublimely because it stays aloof from all our earthly activities, it sees all, yet takes no part in it. . . . The moon shines without giving heat; perhaps here is the reason it was called chaste and identified with [the goddess] Diana. Because of its beneficiary effect on our mind, the moon gradually becomes our friend, unlike the sun, who, like an overzealous benefactress, we never want to look in the face."²⁰

Friedrich included pensive pairs of figures in his paintings from about 1817 on.²¹ The dress of these figures always identifies them as city dwellers, and as such they follow in the tradition of the Romantics' wanderers who, as personifications of their restless yearning, roam their novels and poems. The composer Franz Schubert (1797–1828) also immortalized them in his *Wanderer Fantasy* (1816) and in his song cycle *Die Winterreise* (1827). The pious sharing of nature's sublimity depicted in Friedrich's picture conforms also to the Romantic cult of friendship as celebrated by these artists in life, literature (see fig. 5), poetry, and painting.²² If in other pictures by Friedrich the existence of contemplative figures could seem incidental—in that their removal would not affect the meaning—in *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* landscape and figures assume equal

Figure 3. Jens Juel. *The Crossing at Snoghoj, Lillebælt: Moonrise*, 1787. Oil on canvas, 14¾ × 19⅞ in. (37.5 × 48.5 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



importance. Here, the figures are larger than in most of the artist's works, and their presence contributes to the landscape's symbolic meaning.

Both men's outfits—the beret and cape of the figure on the right and the cap and coat of the one on the left (see fig. 6)—emulate the medieval Old German garb that had been adopted by the members of the Jena Student Association (Jenaer Studenten Bund) in 1815. These radical students opposed the ultraconservative politics practiced by Metternich and the Congress of Vienna in

the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. After the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, repressive laws tightened: books and newspapers were censored, universities placed under surveillance, and all student associations banned. The staunchly patriotic Friedrich deliberately ignored the 1819 royal decree that forbade this dress, which was seen as the “demagogues’ uniform.” He continued to show his figures in Old German dress until his death in 1840. Friedrich even poked fun at these repressive, “antidemagogical” rules when he told

Figure 4. Aert van der Neer. *Moonlight on the River before the Town*, ca. 1648–50. Oil on wood, 18⅞ × 27½ in. (46 × 70 cm). Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

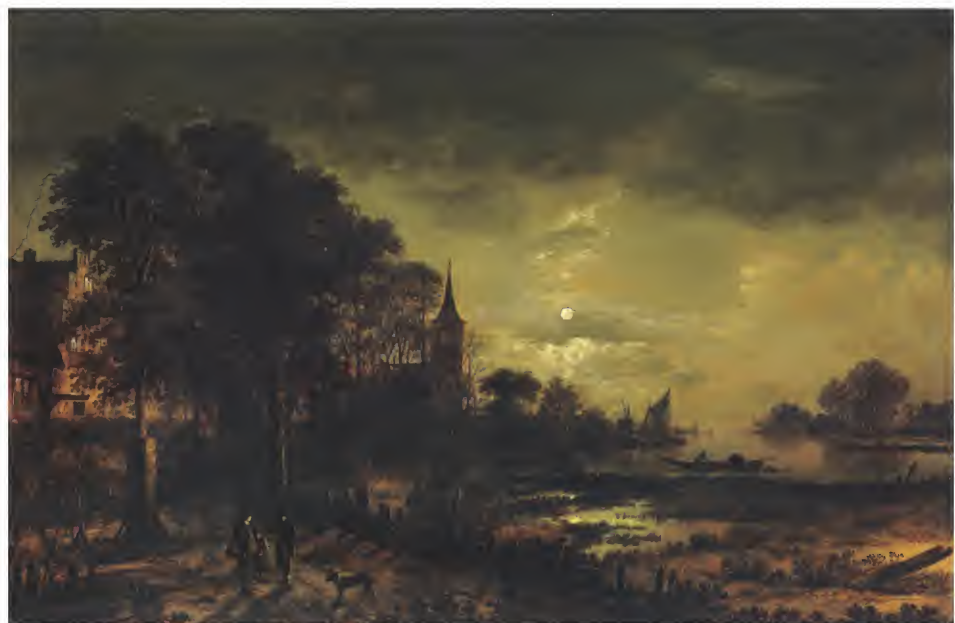




Figure 5. Jean-Baptiste Simonet, after Jean-Michel Moreau, called Le Jeune. *Nature Displayed All Her Splendors to Our Eyes* (*La Nature étaloit à nos yeux toute sa magnificence*); illustration for Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (Paris, 1778; vol. 2, p. 8). Engraving, 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ \times 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (29 \times 21 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1920 (30.67.2)

visitors to his studio in 1820—their visit is cited at the beginning of this essay—that the two men in this painting were “plotting demagogical unrest.” The blue green of the two men’s garb is the only other color in the near-monochrome haze of rust and brown in which the moon wraps nature. Pictures like these led Goethe to complain that Friedrich “ignores the use of light” and “does not strive to adjust his colors to one another or to create a harmony.”²³ The poet acknowledged grudgingly, however, that Friedrich’s pictures were “thought-out inventions.” Indeed they were, even if those familiar with the artist’s predilection for nocturnal walks would have recognized in this small picture a scene related to Friedrich’s own life. As the painter and physician Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869) wrote after the death of his friend in 1840,

Friedrich’s sole diversions were his solitary walks just before sunrise or just after sunset.²⁴

The landscape depicted has been variously described as a cliff on the island of Rügen and as a spot in the Harz Mountains.²⁵ However, the landscape is as imaginary as the juxtaposition of the emblematic uprooted oak, fir tree, rock, and branch along the path. For the deeply religious artist, nature and its emanations were simply the hieroglyphs of God.²⁶ Yet, however unconnected these independent elements in the picture may look, they are based on precise studies after nature that the artist had made in various regions at different times (see fig. 7 and cat. no. 4) and that he combined here in a single composition. The moon is just as accurately observed. The faintly illuminated orb that completes the much brighter crescent (see fig. 8) exhibits what astronomers describe as “earthshine.”²⁷ This is the reflection of light from the sunlit half of the earth onto the otherwise dark side of the moon. The position of the planet Venus, or the evening star, to the right of the moon, as depicted in this picture, occurs only rarely during the course of the year.²⁸ The waxing moon, barely three days old, is in keeping with Friedrich’s preference for a veiled, partially hidden moon. He rarely painted a starkly full moon, but usually covered it partly with clouds. It would not be within the spirit of this staged tableau vivant to call on logic and wonder how these two men could ever find their way back home through the dark night. Or, conversely, to wonder how the three-day-old sickle of moon could dip the landscape into such an evenly pervasive moonlit haze.

Since these figures are seen from the back, does it matter who they are? In this picture, their supposed identities do add interest. According to contemporary sources, the two figures are Friedrich himself, leaning on a walking stick, and August Heinrich (1794–1822), his most talented young painter colleague.²⁹ Unlike his Romantic contemporaries, who charged their landscapes with symbolism, Heinrich examined his surroundings with the clear-eyed objectivity of a botanist. This



Figure 6. Caspar David Friedrich. *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (detail), 1819. Oil on canvas, $13\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ in. (35×44.5 cm). Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

quality, combined with his brilliant draftsman-ship and a preference for simple motifs, resulted in singular images that, in their truthfulness and modesty, place Heinrich ahead of his time (see fig. 9 and cat. no. 17).³⁰ Friedrich praised Heinrich's truthfulness, yet saw in his objectivity and near-fanatical attention to detail a lack of poetic or allegorical weight. Friedrich's friend and upstairs neighbor, the previously mentioned Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl, also admired Heinrich's work and went sketching with the young painter around Dresden.

Dahl had come to Dresden in 1818 and remained there until his death in 1857. In 1823, he had moved onto the upper floor of Friedrich's house at An der Elbe 33, facing the river Elbe. The two painters became close friends, even godfathers to their respective children. In the Dresden artists' community, the two painters were seen as a complementary pair: the tall, big-



Figure 7. Caspar David Friedrich. *Bare Oak Tree*, May 3, 1809. Graphite on paper, $14\frac{1}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ in. (36×25.9 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo



Figure 8. Caspar David Friedrich. *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (detail), 1819. Oil on canvas, $13\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ in. (35×44.5 cm). Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

boned, blond-bearded, blue-eyed, melancholic, introverted, and deeply religious Friedrich (fig. 10) and the small, dark-haired, temperamental, lively, and matter-of-fact Dahl (fig. 11).³¹



Figure 9. August Heinrich. *Fir Trees*, 1818–19. Graphite on paper, 17½ × 13 in. (44.5 × 33 cm). Whereabouts unknown. Photograph courtesy of Gode Krämer, Augsburg

Their mutual friend Heinrich suffered from poverty and ill health and died in 1822 of consumption in Innsbruck, on his way to Italy. As a tribute to his dead friend, Friedrich copied one of Heinrich's watercolors in his famous Alpine landscape *The Watzmann* (1824–25), in the collection of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin.³² Similarly, as a tribute to *his* dead friend, Dahl then copied the same watercolor for *his* painting *The Watzmann* (1825).³³ After Heinrich's death, Dahl bought a large group of his works, together with his diary, directly from his estate. Friedrich then gave the 1819 version of *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* to his friend Dahl in exchange for one of Dahl's own works.³⁴ Since Dahl had shown such deep interest in Heinrich, he may have requested this painting shortly after he moved upstairs from Friedrich in 1823—just one year after Heinrich's death—to keep as a memorial of the young painter. Even though Heinrich is presented from

the back in Friedrich's painting, it would have been the only extant image of the artist, of whom no other portraits are known.³⁵

Dahl kept *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* until after Friedrich's death in 1840, when, in memory of his friend, he sold it to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie for eighty *taler*.³⁶ On that occasion, Dahl wrote to the museum: "This picture, full of sentiment and the quietness of nature, was painted by Friedrich in 1819 and he gave it to me in exchange for one of my own works. Friedrich had to copy it several times, but he did not approve of this, hence others copied it as well. Only the deserved destination for the picture, the Royal Picture Gallery, could convince me to part with it."³⁷ Since Dahl knows so much about Friedrich's "copying" of this picture, it must have occurred after the trade took place.³⁸ His statement that Friedrich "had to copy [the picture] several times" and that he "did not approve of this" suggests that Friedrich did not enjoy repeating himself; it also explains the slight variations in the three pictures. Yet, by having the moon float in exactly the same position in all three versions—slightly to the left of center—Friedrich followed his inner vision instead of nature. The low position of the setting moon in the Dresden picture marks the time as evening and the season as late autumn. In the Berlin variant, *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (ca. 1824; cat. no. 2), Friedrich kept the moon in the same place but changed the light to a rose-mauve color. This particular position of the moon in conjunction with that kind of light occurs only at dusk and only in spring. Yet the landscape is as autumnal as in the earlier picture.

If in the nocturnal Dresden version the hazy, rust-brown moonlight unifies sky and landscape, in the Berlin painting the light of early dusk creates a contrast between the dark foreground and the luminous infinity of the sky. Instead of the moon, the dark silhouette of the dead oak, with its spiky, nervous branches and menacingly exposed, moss-covered roots, now dominates the picture. Its gnarled magnificence evokes the



Figure 10. Caspar David Friedrich. *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1810. Chalk on paper, $9\frac{1}{16} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23×18.2 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



Figure 11. Johann Carl Rössler. *Johan Christian Dahl*, 1819–20. Oil on canvas, $39\frac{1}{8} \times 29\frac{7}{8}$ in. (99.5×76 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo

painter's famous *Raven Tree* of 1822 in the Louvre (fig. 12). Unlike the narrow path in the Dresden and New York versions, here the uphill path is wider and flatter and therefore seems less steep. The tree stump in the left foreground—neatly chopped off in the other pictures—here is splintered and ragged, though barely visible. And here the evening star, which is parallel to the moon in the Dresden picture, has moved up to the right.

Moreover, the complicity indicated in the other versions by the younger man's leaning lightly on his older friend and by the closeness of their heads does not exist between the man and the woman. These figures stand stiffly erect next to each other, and though the woman rests her hand on the shoulder of her companion, they seem mute. It has been suggested in the literature since the painting's appearance in 1922 that the couple represents Friedrich and his wife, Caroline, whom the artist rarely depicted and always from the back. But until now no one has ever mentioned the curious fact that no walking stick supports the man's arm,

raised under his cape in the same position as in the Dresden picture, where it does rest on one.³⁹ The copying of this posture alone—now meaningless in the absence of the walking stick—would seem to assign the Berlin picture second place, after the Dresden one. The otherwise sharply observant Friedrich must have forgotten to copy the walking stick here; however, he remembered to include it again in the New York version.

In his 1973 catalogue of Friedrich's oeuvre, Börsch-Supan related the enamel-like surface of the Berlin picture to the artist's late works and assigned it a date of about 1830–35.⁴⁰ The curators of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin have now changed this date to about 1824.⁴¹ Even if at that date Friedrich had already given the first version to his friend Dahl, who lived upstairs from him, Friedrich still had easy access to the earlier painting. Kasper Monrad proposes in his essay, beginning on page 23, that the Berlin picture might have been inspired by the Danish writer and art critic Peder Hjort (1793–1871), who became

acquainted with Friedrich in Dresden in the autumn of 1817. During one visit, Hjort reminisced about a promenade with his fiancée on the outskirts of Copenhagen under unusual moonlight. Inspired by this tale, Friedrich supposedly promised to paint the scene and then to send the painting as a gift to Hjort's fiancée in Copenhagen. If the Berlin picture were indeed the one that Friedrich sent to Copenhagen in the spring of 1818, its date would have to be advanced to 1817 or 1818, making it, as Monrad suggests, the first version. Since the Berlin picture differs most markedly from the other two versions, since its whereabouts before 1922 are unknown, and since none of Friedrich's German contemporaries mentions it in the record, the proposition that it is the first version is indeed an intriguing one, although precise and convincing documentary proof would still have to be found, and certain outstanding questions would have to be answered. For instance, according to Monrad, Dahl would have seen the Berlin version at Hjort's house in Copenhagen in 1818, shortly before the painter left Denmark. If so, would he not have mentioned its existence in his 1840 letter to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie? Since he referred to Friedrich's "copying" of the Dresden

version, he would surely also have referred to the Dresden version as being, in fact, already a "copy."

And the third version?⁴² This painting of about 1830 in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (cat. no. 3) retains the atmosphere of early dusk from the Berlin picture yet reinstates the two complicit male figures of the Dresden picture. The artist's choice of these specific elements poses questions. Did Friedrich select these features from the two earlier versions and combine them here because he considered them more successful? Was the lighter sky simply easier to repeat than the deeply nocturnal one? Were these gentler or more pleasing features more suitable to the person who requested this picture? It is impossible to know. We do know, however, that even at this date Friedrich would have had easy access to the Dresden picture, which was still upstairs in the collection of his friend Dahl. The two men, the narrow path, and the broken-off branch on the far right—the last absent in the Berlin picture—match those in the Dresden version with only slight nuances in their placement. The forms, less detailed than in the other two variants, were rendered with a fluid, assured brush that, as infrared examination has established, needed no underdrawing to guide



Figure 12. Caspar David Friedrich. *Raven Tree*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 28 in. (54 x 71 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris (R.F. 1975-20). Photograph courtesy of Galerie Nathan, Zürich

it. Green leaves, barely visible in the dark Dresden picture and entirely absent in the Berlin, here are quite visibly attached to some of the branches of the oak. Suffused with the glow of early dusk, the New York picture conveys the greatest sense of serenity.

Except for paintings that were acquired during Friedrich's lifetime by prominent patrons such as Frederick William III of Prussia and Czar Nicholas I of Russia, which are now in museums in Germany and Russia, few of the artist's works have remained continuously with the descendants of their original owners. It is therefore rather unusual that we can trace the history of the picture in the Metropolitan Museum from its first owner up to the present.

By the late 1820s, Friedrich's health had begun to fail, and he started to suffer from depression. Dr. Otto Friedrich Rosenberg (1770–1850), the physician who was treating him, was a son-in-law of the thinker and philosopher Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), who had himself been a friend of the philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803). Known as the “magus of the North,” Hamann, a typical representative of the Sturm und Drang movement, had championed the irrational, the ambiguous, and the fantastic over reason. He had had a great influence on the young Goethe—who wanted to edit his mostly aphoristic and cryptic writing—as well as on the other Romantic poets and writers. Rosenberg had married Hamann's eldest daughter in Königsberg in the 1790s and in 1819 had moved with his family to Dresden. In lieu of a fee, Dr. Rosenberg apparently asked Friedrich for this supposedly final version of *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, which remained with his descendants in Germany for the next one hundred and seventy years, until shortly before it entered the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in early 2000.

★ ★ ★

Friedrich's three takes on *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* are but one example of his having



Figure 13. Georg Friedrich Kersting. *Man Reading by Lamplight*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 18¾ × 14⅝ in. (47.5 × 37 cm). Oskar Reinhardt Foundation, Winterthur

repeated favorite motifs with slight variations.⁴³ When Friedrich created variants, they tended to be of small pictures in the standard format of 13¾ by 17¼ inches, such as the present works. The original version's small size and the absence of large areas of sky, on which the artist would otherwise have spent a great amount of time (skies always demanded his most intense concentration), made it a candidate for relatively easy copying. If Friedrich somewhat grudgingly created variants of this painting (as we know from Dahl), and even agreed to let others make copies, he must, at least, have taken a secret satisfaction in the knowledge that his picture was “in demand.” And if the motif lends itself to so many wildly different interpretations today, in its own time as well it meant different things to different people. Indeed, it was regarded both as a picture celebrating friendship and as a memorial to Heinrich. More immediately, however, its imagery related to the great fascination with the moon found in the poetry, philosophy, literature, and music of the time.



Figure 14. Honoré Daumier. *Unsuccessful Plumbing of the Planet Leverrier* (*Recherche infructueuse de la planète Leverrier*); lithograph published in *Le Charivari*, December 1846. Photograph courtesy of Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The three pictures were thus perfectly in tune with their time, coveted and understood. The latter was not always the case with Friedrich's work. His contemporaries had much commented on the singularity of his motifs. With baffled admiration they had termed them "odd," "barren," and "monotonous," as well as "mysteriously religious," "melancholy and desolate," and "affecting the heart more than the eye" (see p. 41). In these works, however, the painter spoke directly to both the heart and the eye.

Friedrich continued to portray moonlight as the only source of light at night, and a divine one at that, until his death in 1840. He might have done so to spite the realization that darkness was gradually, but systematically, being invaded by artificial light. A new kind of oil lamp had been invented in the late eighteenth century, to be followed by the introduction of gaslight around

1800 and of electricity around 1880.⁴⁴ Another friend of Friedrich's in Dresden, the painter Georg Friedrich Kersting (1785–1847), was fascinated by the new Argand oil lamps, which supplied a cylindrical, hollow wick with additional oxygen by enclosing it in a glass tube in order to create a draft. In his meditative interiors, solitary figures read, think, or sew by the shine of these bright new light sources (see fig. 13).

By 1850, ten years after Friedrich's death, his friend Dahl was also depicting moonlight differently than he had previously. In his painting *Dresden by Moonlight* of 1850 (cat. no. 15), Dahl now included the rapidly disintegrating halo formed by the clouds around the moon, a phenomenon he had observed with as much precision before, but only in his private cloud studies (see cat. no. 12). More interesting, however, is that Dahl acknowledged in this small view of Dresden,

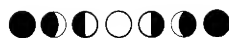
still dominated by the moon, the approach of what might be artificial light. The windows of a few houses twinkle in the dark night, betraying interiors perhaps already illuminated by gaslight. His friend Friedrich would not have approved. Indeed, “gaslight’s stench destroys the fragrant moon night,” quipped the German poet and writer Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), summing up his period’s growing disillusionment with the worship of the moon.⁴⁵ By exposing the moon’s

magic as a delusion of the senses, and mockingly calling it a “vain five-cent candle,” Heine dealt poetry’s and literature’s infatuation with the moon its death knell around 1851–55.⁴⁶ Heine’s French contemporary Honoré Daumier participated in this debunking with his 1846 lithograph (fig. 14) of a corpulent couple gaping at the stars; these “bons bourgeois” could almost be a caricature of Friedrich’s contemplative figures seen from the back.

Notes

1. When the painter Peter von Cornelius and his student Karl Förster visited the artist on April 19, 1820, Friedrich is supposed to have made that comment. Cited in Helmut Börsch-Supan and Karl Wilhelm Jähnig, *Caspar David Friedrich: Gemälde, Druckgraphik und bildmässige Zeichnungen* (Munich, 1973), p. 136. All subsequent citations of the catalogue raisonné, throughout this volume, will take the abbreviated form CDF 1973.
2. See Ewen A. Whitaker, *Mapping and Naming the Moon: A History of Lunar Cartography and Nomenclature* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 115–16. All information on the mapping of the moon is taken from this source.
3. The lawyer, the telescope maker, and the Jesuit were, in sequence, Francesco Fontana (1585–1656), Eustachio Divini (1610–1685), and Gerolamo Sersale (Sirsalis; 1584–1654). The theologian-mathematician-philosopher was Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655); the Capuchin friar was Chérubin d’Orléans (1613–1697); the distinguished physicist was Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695); and the member of a prominent globe- and map-making family was Michiel Van Langren (1600–1675). *Ibid.*, pp. 25–76.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–21.
5. Scott L. Montgomery, *The Moon and the Western Imagination* (Tucson, 1999), pp. 86–88.
6. Besides Aert van der Neer’s two moonlit scenes, *Moonlight on the River before the Town and Evening on the River in Town* (inv. nos. 1552, 1553), Friedrich would also have seen works by Rafel Govertsz. Camphuysen and David Teniers the Younger. I am grateful to Gregor J. M. Weber of the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, for this information. In fact, Friedrich had moved to Dresden, then called the “German Florence,” precisely because he wanted to “work in close proximity to its splendid art treasures and beautiful countryside.” See his letter of May 10, 1816, to Frederick Augustus I, king of Saxony, which is kept in the Staatsarchiv of Dresden, Kunstakademie Dresden, vol. 33, pp. 94–96; cited in Karl-Ludwig Hoch, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich—unbekannte Dokumente seines Lebens* (Dresden, 1985), p. 62. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
7. See E. Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächthold-Stäubli, eds., *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1934–35), vol. 4, p. 482.
8. See Werner Wolf, *Der Mond im deutschen Volksglauben* (Bühl, 1929).
9. See Kaspar H. Spinner, *Der Mond in der deutschen Dichtung von der Aufklärung bis zur Spätromantik* (Bonn, 1969), pp. 18–26. Much of the information on the moon in German poetry is taken from this source.
10. Joseph von Eichendorff, *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne; 1993), vol. 1, p. 327. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
11. Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften* (Berlin, 1828–54), vol. 2, p. 71; vol. 1, p. 33. Translations by Sabine Rewald.
12. Clemens Brentano, *Werke*, ed. Friedhelm Kemp (Darmstadt, 1963), vol. 2, p. 155. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
13. See Spinner, *Der Mond in der deutschen Dichtung*, pp. 46–62.
14. See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gesamtausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zürich, 1948–54), vol. 4, p. 354.
15. Goethe’s “An den Mond” (later retitled “An Luna”) and Matthias Claudius’s “Evening Song” (“Abendlied”; 1770) are the most famous poems about the moon in German literature. See Goethe, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1, p. 38. See also Matthias Claudius, *Werke*, ed. Urban Roedel (Stuttgart, 1965), p. 264.
16. Spinner, *Der Mond in der deutschen Dichtung*, p. 59 n. 178. See also Goethe, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 11, pp. 673–75.
17. Goethe was fascinated by Luke Howard’s systematic classification of clouds—begun in 1803 and translated from English into German in 1815—and wrote a treatise and poems based on it. See also CDF 1973, p. 52.
18. Novalis, “Logologische Fragmente II,” no. 105 (1798), in *Das Philosophische Werk*, pt. 1, in *Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckholm and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart, 1960–65), vol. 2, p. 545. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
19. Werner Busch delineates these wildly diverging views in Busch, “Zu Verständnis und Interpretation romantischer Kunst,” in *Arte Fakten: Kunsthistorische Schriften*, ed. Ludger Fischer (Anweiler, 1987), pp. 19–29.
20. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, pt. 2 (1842), in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Arthur Hübscher (Wiesbaden, 1972), vol. 3, pp. 428–29. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
21. See Wieland Schmied, *Caspar David Friedrich* (Cologne, 1975), pp. 82–83.
22. See Klaus Lankheit, *Das Freundschaftsbild der Romantik* (Heidelberg, 1952), p. 104. For Moreau Le Jeune’s illustration for Rousseau’s *Émile* (1778), see Wolfgang Becker, *Paris und die deutsche Malerei 1750–1840* (Munich, 1971), fig. 36.

23. "Goethe's Briefwechsel mit Heinrich Meyer," in *Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft*, ed. M. Hekker (Weimar, 1919), vol. 34, pp. 305–6; cited in *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen*, ed. Sigrid Hinz (Berlin, 1968), p. 221. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
24. See Carl Gustav Carus, "Caspar David Friedrich, der Landschaftsmaler: zu seinem Gedächtnis, nebst Fragmenten aus seinen nachgelassenen Papieren seinem Bildniss und seinem Faksimile" (Dresden, 1841); cited in Hinz, *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen*, p. 202.
25. See [Hans Werner Grohn], "Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes," in Werner Hoffmann, *Caspar David Friedrich 1774–1840*, exh. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle (Hamburg, 1974), pp. 226–27; and H[ans] J[oa]chim N[eidhard], "Deux hommes contemplant la lune," in *La peinture allemande à l'époque du Romantisme*, exh. cat., Musée de l'Orangerie (Paris, 1976–77), cat. no. 68, p. 59.
26. See Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York, 1979), p. 77.
27. I wish to thank Stephen Soter, astronomer at the Hayden Planetarium, American Museum of Natural History, New York, for kindly explaining this phenomenon to me. With reference to Kasper Monrad's discussion on pp. 27–28, in a lunar eclipse the shadow of the much larger earth would visibly surround the moon.
28. The Dresden astronomer Peter Brosche discusses the position of the moon and evening star in Friedrich's painting in his article "Sie betrachten die Venus," *Sterne und Weltraum* (1995), no. 3, pp. 194–96.
29. See CDF 1973, cat. no. 261, pp. 356–57. In his letter of Sept. 26, 1840, to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie (see n. 34), Dahl writes that the two men are the eighteen-year-old Christian Wilhelm Bommer, Friedrich's brother-in-law, and the twenty-five-year-old August Heinrich. However, according to Wilhelm Wegener, they are Friedrich himself and Heinrich, which seems more plausible considering that one man is old, the other young. See Wilhelm Wegener, "Der Landschaftsmaler Friedrich: Eine biographische Skizze" (1859), pp. 71–77; cited in CDF 1973, p. 146.
30. See Sabine Rewald, "August Heinrich: Poet of Loschwitz Cemetery," *Master Drawings* 39, no. 2 (summer 2001), p. 143.
31. See Marie Lødrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 1, p. 73. The information on Dahl and Friedrich is from her vol. 1, ch. 6, devoted to the relationship between the artists.
32. Heinrich's watercolor *Mountain Ridge with Watzmann Mountain* of 1820 (Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo; inv. no. B15644) was exhibited in the artist's memorial exhibition at the Dresden Academy in 1823 as no. 168. Friedrich could also have seen the drawing at the lodgings of his friend Dahl, who acquired the work after the close of the exhibition at the academy. See Gode Krämer, *Der Maler und Zeichner August Heinrich: Dresden 1794–1822 Innsbruck* (Karlsruhe, 1979), p. 150.
33. See Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl*, vol. 2, cat. no. 469, p. 163 (private coll., Oslo).
34. We know this from Dahl's letter, dated Sept. 26, 1840, to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie. This letter is kept in the Sächsische Hauptarchiv, Dresden. Cited in CDF 1973, p. 216 n. 34.
35. Gode Krämer has an interesting theory for the absence of portraits of Heinrich. Although Heinrich crossed the paths of many of his contemporaries, all of whom commented on his great modesty and tragic life and all of them accomplished draftsmen, no one ever penned his portrait. Krämer believes that Heinrich's looks probably did not invite portraits. Krämer's letter to the author, April 23, 2001.
36. It is difficult to give an equivalent in today's dollars for eighty *taler*. However, as a comparison, in 1832 a sculptor who taught as an independent professor at the Dresden Academy earned an annual salary of three hundred *taler*; a weaver in Saxony earned about sixty *taler* a year to feed his family of five; and an independent master craftsman earned about one hundred *taler*. I am grateful to Gerd Spitzer of the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, for this information.
37. See n. 34. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
38. According to Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, one copy by Carl Julius von Leypold, who was a student of Dahl's, was exhibited in Dresden as early as 1824. The Friedrich itself appears in an inventory of Dahl's collection by 1830. See CDF 1973, cat. no. 261, pp. 356–57.
39. In his forthcoming book on Friedrich (see p. 31 n. 1), Werner Busch will be the first author to discuss the implications of the missing walking stick.
40. See CDF 1973, cat. no. 404, p. 433.
41. In her original manuscript for a recent catalogue entry, Birgit Verwiebe discusses the broad time frame now proposed for the work as between 1818 and 1835. As a compromise, it seems, the Nationalgalerie's official date for the painting is now given as "ca. 1824." However, the English editors have changed this date, without prior consultation with her, to "ca. 1818–25" in *Spirit of an Age: Nineteenth-Century Paintings from the Nationalgalerie*, Berlin, exh. cat., National Gallery (London, 2001) and National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C., 2001), cat. no. 9, p. 72.
42. A fourth version of this motif is located on the art market in Hamburg. Although not accepted by Börsch-Supan and Jähnig in CDF 1973 ("Doubtful and Wrongly Attributed Works," no. 43, p. 488), it is accepted by the other renowned Friedrich scholar, Werner Sumowski, in his *Caspar David Friedrich—Studien* (Wiesbaden, 1970), p. 179. See also Kurt Wettengl, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich: Winterlandschaften*, exh. cat., Museum für Kunst und Kunstgeschichte (Dortmund, 1990), cat. no. 38, pp. 138–39.
43. The most famous of these are *Winter Landscape* (1811) in the collection of the National Gallery, London, and *Winter Landscape with Church* (1811) in the collection of the Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund. Since the appearance of *Winter Landscape* from a Russian estate in Paris in 1982 and its subsequent acquisition by the National Gallery in 1987, Börsch-Supan recognizes only the London picture as being by Friedrich. See Wettengl, *Caspar David Friedrich*, cat. nos. 24, 25; pp. 120–21.
44. See the thought-provoking *Light! The Industrial Age 1750–1900: Art and Science, Technology and Society*, ed. Andreas Blühm and Louise Lippincott, exh. cat., Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, 2000–2001) and Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh, 2000–2001), pp. 15, 80.
45. Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Oskar Walzel (Leipzig, 1910–15), vol. 10 (1915), p. 255. Cited in Spinner, *Der Mond in der deutschen Dichtung*, p. 99.
46. Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 3 (1913), p. 424.



FRIEDRICH AND TWO DANISH MOONWATCHERS

KASPER MONRAD

The motif of two people standing between two trees and gazing at the moon is among the most profound in Caspar David Friedrich's oeuvre (see cat. nos. 1–3). The magical attraction of the motif owes much to the enigmatic nature of the scene, because we, as viewers, know not what the figures are contemplating, aside from the moon. Before and below them is a landscape, but it is hidden from us. It is probably a valley, but what valley is it? We have the feeling that the figures are facing infinity, and this impression contributes to the intense, reverent experience of nature that is conveyed by the images, and from which they obtain their existential character.

There can be no doubt that this motif was based on a particular individual's experience in nature; and, as I will explore in the following essay, it may have been the Danish author and critic Peder Hjort (1793–1871) who gave Friedrich the decisive inspiration for the motif. In return, he was given a painting. Art historians have long known of the existence of Hjort's Friedrich. In 1842, the Danish painter Johan Thomas Lundbye visited the critic at his home in the market town of Sorø, and afterward he wrote in his journal that he had observed "two paintings of interest to me, namely a landscape by the Saxon Friedrich

and a head by Henrik Hess."¹ Lundbye's diary was not published until 1967, but before that it had been in widespread use among Danish art historians, and the remark about Friedrich has caused comment on several occasions.² But which of Friedrich's paintings Lundbye was referring to, and how it may have come into Hjort's possession, have been a mystery. Both questions are broached, however, in two letters Hjort mailed to Copenhagen, one from Dresden and one from Rome. The Dresden letter was stored quite obscurely at the Royal Library in Copenhagen for more than a century, until it was published and discussed in connection with the exhibition "Caspar David Friedrich und Dänemark," held at the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen in 1991.³

Peder Hjort arrived in Dresden on September 27, 1817, and stayed there until November 23. In the course of those two months, a friendship grew between him and Friedrich. Near the end of his stay, he wrote in a letter to his fiancée, Olivia Rasbech:

But I must not neglect to report to you the three friends I have won. The first, the composer Carl Maria [von] Weber, I won through a spontaneous

stream of tears, the second, the landscape painter Friedrich, I won by describing to him a moonlit scene, the third, M^{me} Helmine de Chezy, a woman as it were, . . . by putting up with her utter lack of feminine graces. . . . 'Twas Sibbern⁴ who recommended me to Friedrich. My knowledge of German poetry and passionate interest in painting soon forged a bond between us. His paintings are actually lyrical poems. The foreground of a small painting is the smooth beach. The background is the sea, above are the clouds, a young man in a black-and-green coat is walking along the water's edge and gazes out to sea, observing the waves and changing colors, that is all. In a slim but somewhat tall painting, two men stand, at night, in a watchman's gallery. Leaning on the balustrade and looking somber, they stare into the pitch-black night beneath them; the tower is dimly illuminated by moonlight, that is all. In a dark painting a simple funeral procession is seen, nothing else. He has lived at Rügen, loves the sea, and has spent a short while in Copenhagen. I described for him lately, when we conversed of suchlike moods, the rare beauty of the moonlight that we [Hjort and Olivia Rasbech] observed as we wandered past the old limestone kiln, and my words fell so fortuitously that he burst out: *Das mal' ich Ihnen!* [I shall paint that for you!] I perceived this as a smile, a handshake, but as I prepared to take my leave he said: Give me the lady's address the next time we meet, and you shall find that upon your return from this voyage, the painting shall adorn her wall. [Later, probably in about 1870, Hjort added a footnote to his letter when preparing it for publication: "And it really was there upon my return, and it is there to this day."] But this was not the end of the matter. At the very next meeting between us, he demanded to be shown your portrait, which I naturally had in my possession, and he already had a first draft of the painting, which he showed to me with these very words: *Nicht wahr? So war's?* [That's how it was, wasn't it?] I do believe that I, once in every capital city, shall let your picture be seen! I hesitated for a few weeks, but then I had to yield, upon

which he solemnly declared: *Ein festes Auge, das ist ja fast wie ein Knäblein! Mag's einen herrlichen Charakter geben, wenn sie ins Leben tritt* [A firm gaze; it is almost like that of a small boy! May it give her a delightful character when she steps out into life.].⁵

No known painting by Friedrich can be positively identified as one of those that Hjort described. But the coastal motif with the lonely wanderer, as well as the motif of the funeral procession, occurs repeatedly in Friedrich's work, so it is very difficult to determine whether Hjort is referring to paintings now lost or is simply inaccurate in his descriptions.⁶ Most interesting, however, is Hjort's account of how Friedrich was inspired to make the painting for him and his fiancée. Actually, the tale is quite unique, because there is no other known account that similarly sheds light on how Friedrich conceived a painting.

When Hjort wrote the letter, he obviously had no way of knowing what Friedrich's new painting would look like when finished, and therefore it cannot be identified on the basis of his text alone. But he did comment further on the painting in a later letter, sent from Rome to the philosopher Frederik Christian Sibbern. The painting must, by all accounts, have arrived in Copenhagen in the spring of 1818. And, in a letter (now lost) to Hjort dated May 9, 1818, the writer Christian Molbech had apparently stated his reservations with respect to the painting's motif. What he wrote can be inferred from a passage in Hjort's letter to Sibbern: "That the two figures which Friedrich has painted in the landscape he has sent to my home are not of the likeness of Olivia and myself has been the cause of wonder to M. [Molbech], yet I have wondered even more that anyone would wonder at that."⁷

Years later, presumably in the late 1860s, Hjort worked on a publication of his letters from his journeys, which was to be titled *Minder fra et Ophold i Udlandet 1817–1821* (*Memories from a Stay*



Figure 15. Christen Købke. *View of the Bay near the Limekiln outside Copenhagen, Seen from the Promenade Looking North: A Quiet Summer's Afternoon*, 1837. Oil on canvas, $20\frac{3}{8} \times 31\frac{1}{4}$ in. (52.5 × 80.5 cm). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

Abroad 1817–1821). In connection with this project, he added a footnote to his letter to Sibbern: “The dear Friedrich in Dresden was so enraptured by a very peculiar instance of moonlight, to which I had been witness and told him of, that he did an entire painting of that particular moonlight and sent it to my fiancée while I was away in Rome. I have it on my wall to this day.”⁸ These memoirs from his youth were never published, however, and exist only as a manuscript kept with the author’s papers at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

It is not known what happened to the painting after Hjort died in 1871. The accounting of his estate, made upon his death, was not itemized, and thus it is not known which of his six children inherited the painting.⁹

We do know that the painting Friedrich sent to Hjort depicted two idealized figures, a man and a woman, standing together on an evocative

evening, gazing into moonlight of “rare beauty.” Only one of Friedrich’s extant paintings fits this description, and that is *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (cat. no. 2), which has been in the possession of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, since 1935. It is therefore quite possible that Hjort once owned this painting. Nothing that is known about the provenance of the Berlin canvas gainsays this hypothesis, since it is undocumented prior to 1922. Nor is the identification of the couple in the painting as Hjort and his fiancée refuted by the established facts about the painting. None of the painter’s German contemporaries reported whom the couple in the painting was supposed to represent. It has, however, quite often been claimed that Friedrich’s Norwegian friend, the painter Johan Christian Dahl, suggested in a letter dated 1840 that the two people were Friedrich and his wife, Caroline.¹⁰ But, in fact, Dahl made absolutely no mention of that

particular painting in the letter in question (this was the letter addressed to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie that Sabine Rewald discusses on p. 16 of her essay).¹¹ Unless Hjort possessed a painting by Friedrich that is now lost and unknown to us, it may very well have been this work that was displayed in his home for half a century, until his death.

The German painter could have had quite a vivid image in his mind when Hjort described his moonlit experience, because during his stay in Copenhagen (1794–98) he had most definitely seen for himself the limekiln past which Hjort and his fiancée had strolled. We know that on several occasions he walked or rode north along the shoreline from the city, and hence must have passed the limekiln, because he made watercolors in what are now the suburbs of Hellerup and Klampenborg.¹² But just one glance at a painting made of the landscape near the limekiln twenty years later by the Danish painter Christen Købke (fig. 15) makes it clear that Friedrich did not attempt to depict the level meadows along the shore that he himself had seen. Just as he chose to disregard the physical traits of the painting's two protagonists, Friedrich also ignored his knowledge of the actual place in which their moonlit epiphany had occurred.

The account in Hjort's letters of the genesis of his painting suggests that he had the privilege of owning the *very first* version of the motif of the two moonwatchers. It is unlikely that his story would have inspired Friedrich merely to paint a variation of an earlier picture—leading me to the conclusion that the canvas in Dresden (cat. no. 1) could not have been the first version of the motif, even though it has usually been assumed so. Dahl's statement that the Dresden painting was made in 1819, after the two artists had become acquainted, is supported by the fact that so far no one has questioned this dating.

If the identification of Hjort's Friedrich as the painting that is now in the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, is correct, then the formerly recognized order of

Friedrich's three known treatments of the motif is turned upside down. In this scenario, the Berlin version would have been made in the winter of 1817–18, before the other two versions, and sent away immediately to Copenhagen. This would explain why not a single one of the many visitors to Friedrich's studio ever mentioned the painting.

Indirectly, this chronology is substantiated by the fact that (and the manner in which) Dahl later came to own the Dresden version. Before his departure from Copenhagen on September 1, 1818, he must have seen one of Friedrich's paintings, because he noted in his journal during his brief stay in Berlin later that same month that a painting by Friedrich in a private collection was "the second work by him I have seen so far."¹³ It has previously been unclear what picture he had had the opportunity to see before his stay in Berlin, but there are strong indications that it was Hjort's, since it seems that, at that time, no other paintings by Friedrich existed in Denmark. Should this be the case, the painting would have made a huge impression on him—and with good reason, because it was quite unlike anything he had seen before. Thus, when he became acquainted with Friedrich in Dresden, he would naturally have wanted to acquire a variation of the motif for himself; and the two artists did, in fact, trade paintings, with Dahl receiving the Dresden version of *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*.

Another important indication that the Berlin version was the earliest is the gradual development of the iconography. The first painting had to depict a man and a woman, since it was intended for Hjort. Through the choice of two such characters, a familiar symbolism was set in motion: a young couple, about to embark together on the journey of life, face unknown territory ahead of them, just as the couple do in Friedrich's painting *On the Sailboat* of 1818–19 (State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg; fig. 16), which in any case must be understood in relation to the artist's own recent marriage.¹⁴ The two paintings

can thus be seen as variations on the same theme. However, in the two other moonwatcher pictures, which have two male characters, the motif translates into a more general image of spiritual connection. The figures in the Dresden and New York versions are typically thought to be the painter himself and his favorite student, August Heinrich. There would be a certain kind of logic in Friedrich's having initially painted a version based on a specific situation, and then having broadened the theme by changing the personages to men in all subsequent versions. If Hjort's picture is not the one in Berlin but another, now lost, first painting, Friedrich would have had to change from one approach to the other and back again over a period of years. But aside from the Danish author, those who found the image interesting would have preferred a variation with two men. One may assume that this was true of the first owner of the New York version (cat. no. 3), and for Dahl, at least, a painting of two artists would have made the most sense.

Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon is dated later than 1818 by all German art historians. Their dates have fallen between 1819 and 1830–35, with the majority leaning toward approximately 1824.¹⁵ But when the actual method of painting is analyzed, similar traits are found in other paintings from 1818, especially *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), which is usually dated around that year.¹⁶ Both paintings feature the same elaborate rendition of detail and smoothing of individual brushstrokes; the differences in the use of color are due to the difference in motifs.

Since Hjort's letters were published in 1991, two art historians have had the opportunity to comment on them and to consider the identification of his painting. The Friedrich authority Helmut Börsch-Supan concludes that it is impossible that the Berlin picture once belonged to Hjort¹⁷ and, in a 1999 catalogue, dates it to about 1833 on the basis of its "euphonic coloration and light application of colour, typical of Friedrich's



Figure 16. Caspar David Friedrich. *On the Sailboat*, 1818–19. Oil on canvas, 28 × 22 in. (71 × 56 cm). State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE 9773)

later work.”¹⁸ Börsch-Supan makes no mention of the letters in that catalogue entry, however, and does not engage in the discussion that ought to follow his rejection of the idea that the Berlin painting was Hjort's: What painting was it that Hjort owned, if not that in Berlin? And how would that one relate to the three known versions of the motif? On the other hand, Birgit Verwiebe, a curator at the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, has been more willing to accept that the version at her museum may have belonged to Hjort and, several years ago, suggested a date earlier than 1824.¹⁹

It is not apparent from Hjort's account exactly how “the rare beauty of the moonlight” differed from that on other moonlit nights. The prevailing opinion is that the couple is witnessing a waxing moon just after the new moon, with the dark side of the moon illuminated by earthshine (see p. 14 of Sabine Rewald's essay). But another, more compelling interpretation is that they are watching a lunar eclipse.²⁰ The moon is quite

obviously shadowed, so that only a thin crescent is lit up. Imagine a newly engaged young couple embarking on a moonlit stroll outside the fortifications around the city of Copenhagen, and suddenly a lunar eclipse occurs overhead—such an event would surely turn the evening into an unforgettable memory for them both. The phenomenon is by no means unique, but still rare enough for it to be worth telling; and to Friedrich, who accepted nature's different visages with an open mind, making a painting of the scene must have seemed an obvious response.

Regardless of what exact astronomical phenomenon the Danish couple experienced,

Friedrich based his rendition of it on his own artistic experience. The figures are dressed in quaint German costumes in accordance with the patriotic mind of the painter, and the locality has been transformed into a mountain range in Germany, such that no one would ever recognize either the Danish couple or the shoreline north of Copenhagen. But for the German painter and his Danish friend, what mattered was not the exact likeness, but a profound experience of spiritual affinity and mutual appreciation of nature.

*Translated from the Danish by
Jeffrey V. Lazarus and Nicolai Paulsen*

Notes

1. Johan Thomas Lundbye, *Et Aar af mit Liv*, ed. Mogens Lebech (Copenhagen, 1967), p. 107.
2. Cf. Aage Marcus, *Johan Thomas Lundbyes danske Landskabstegninger* (Copenhagen, 1919), p. 57; Henrik Bramsen, *Landskabsmaleriet i Danmark 1750–1875* (Copenhagen, 1935), p. 78; Arne Brenna, "Et efterårslandskab av Christen Købke," *Meddelelser fra Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* 28 (1971), pp. 40–44; CDF 1973, pp. 206, 208; Henrik Bramsen, "Den store Natur er vort Skuespil," in Suzanne Ludvigsen, *Dankvart Dreyer 1816–1852: Malerier og tegninger*, exh. cat., Kunstforeningen (Copenhagen, 1989) and Fyns Kunstmuseum (Odense, 1989), pp. 12, 21 n. 10; Kasper Monrad, *Hverdagsbilleder: Dansk Guldalder—Kunstnerne og deres vilkår* (Copenhagen, 1989), p. 109; and Henrik Bramsen, *Kunst i enevældens sidste århundrede—sådan set* (Copenhagen, 1990), p. 204.
3. See Kasper Monrad, "Caspar David Friedrich und Dänemark: Friedrichs Bedeutung für die dänische Kunst," in Kasper Monrad and Colin J. Bailey, *Caspar David Friedrich und Dänemark*, exh. cat., Statens Museum for Kunst (Copenhagen, 1991), cat. no. 36, pp. 146–47.
4. Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785–1872), a Danish philosopher, visited Friedrich in Dresden in 1813; *ibid.*, pp. 145–46.
5. Letter from Hjort to Rasbech, dated Dresden, Nov. 17, 1817. The original has been lost, but Hjort's own transcript is available in a finished, but never published, manuscript titled *Minder fra et Ophold i Udlandet 1817–1821* (Royal Library, Copenhagen; NKS 2363, 4°). Hjort dated the introduction to the manuscript March 1, 1871 (he died on Nov. 11 of that year). While working on the manuscript, Hjort made a number of notes, very probably in the late 1860s. He did manage to get a few chapters published; see Peder Hjort, *Kritiske Bidrag til nyere dansk Tænkemåde og Dannelses Historie: Konsthistorisk Afdeling* (Copenhagen, 1854), pp. 113–20; and Peder Hjort, *Nyt dansk Maanedsskrift* (Copenhagen, 1871), vol. 1, pp. 132–46, 245–56. One final chapter was published after his death; see Ida Falbe-Hansen, "Fra Peder Hjorts Ophold i Rom 1818–19," *Museum* (1894), no. 1, pp. 65–98. It is only in this last article that the painting by Friedrich is mentioned, and no comments are given.
6. In about 1817, Friedrich finished two paintings of two men by the sea; CDF 1973, cat. nos. 222, 223; pp. 336–37. The picture of the funeral procession may be identical to *Cloister Cemetery in the Snow* of 1817–19 (*ibid.*, cat. no. 254, pp. 351–52), in which, however, a ruin of a Gothic church is also seen. The painting of the two men in the tower also defies identification. But Hjort's description shows several parallels to the painting *The Arbor*, in which a man and a woman are looking toward a Gothic church (ca. 1818; *ibid.*, cat. no. 253, p. 351), and even more to the preparatory drawing for that painting, which features two men. See Sigrid Hinz, "Caspar David Friedrich als Zeichner" (Ph.D. diss., Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität [Greifswald], 1966), cat. no. 702. See also Hans H. Hofstätter, *Caspar David Friedrich: Das gesamte graphische Werk* (Munich, 1974), p. 692.
7. Letter from Hjort to Sibbern, written in Rome in the summer of 1818. The section in question is dated June 20 (Royal Library, Copenhagen; NKS 3449, 4°). Hjort changed the wording somewhat during the preparation of the publication mentioned in n. 5. The letter to Sibbern and Hjort's annotations to it were published in 1894; see Falbe-Hansen, "Fra Peder Hjorts Ophold i Rom 1818–19."
8. Letter from Hjort to Sibbern, summer 1818. See n. 7.
9. Concerning the estate of Peder Hjort, see the court records of the regional archive for Sjælland, Lolland-Falster, and Bornholm in Copenhagen: Landslover- samt hof og stadsretten, Landsarkivet for Sjælland, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm, Copenhagen (Hvidebog 37, sks 906, p. 502).
10. The first person to suggest that the two people in the painting could be Friedrich and his wife was E. Hanfstængl in

- 1937—but without referring to Dahl as the source. See E. Hanfstaengl, “Vier neue Bilder von C. D. Friedrich in der Nationalgalerie,” *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* (Berlin, 1937), p. 219. Apparently, the first use of Dahl as a source in this connection was in *Nationalgalerie Berlin: Verzeichnis der Gemälde und Skulpturen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1976), p. 131. This reference was repeated by Hans Gerd Hannesen in Peter Krieger, ed., *Galerie der Romantik: Nationalgalerie* (Berlin, 1986), p. 50; and by Birgit Verwiebe, “Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon,” in Françoise Forster-Hahn et al., *Spirit of an Age: Nineteenth-Century Paintings from the Nationalgalerie, Berlin*, exh. cat., National Gallery (London, 2001) and National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C., 2001), cat. no. 9, p. 72.
11. Dahl’s letter dated Sept. 26, 1840, to the Dresden Gemäldegalerie is quoted extensively in CDF 1973, p. 216.
 12. CDF 1973, cat. nos. 7, 12 (both in the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), pp. 236, 238.
 13. Cited in Marie Lodrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 1, p. 74.
 14. See Helmut R. Leppien, “On the Sailboat,” in Catherine Johnston et al., *Baltic Light: Early Open-Air Painting in Denmark and North Germany*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, 1999), cat. no. 41, pp. 110–12.
 15. See Hannesen in Krieger, *Galerie der Romantik*, p. 50.
 16. CDF 1973, cat. no. 250, p. 349.
 17. Conversation with the author, December 1997.
 18. Helmut Börsch-Supan, “Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon,” in Johnston et al., *Baltic Light*, cat. no. 47, p. 118.
 19. See Birgit Verwiebe, “Mann und Frau den Mond betrachtend,” in Bernhard Maaz, ed., *Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin* (Munich and New York, 1996), no. 20, p. 25, where it is dated ca. 1818; and Forster-Hahn et al., *Spirit of an Age*, cat. no. 9, p. 72, where it is dated ca. 1818–25.
 20. First proposed in Monrad, “Caspar David Friedrich und Dänemark,” p. 147.



CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH
GERMAN (GREIFSWALD 1774–1840 DRESDEN)

1. *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*
(*Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes*)

1819
Oil on canvas, 13¼ × 17½ in. (35 × 44.5 cm)
Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden

Two men pause on their nocturnal walk through a late-autumnal forest to contemplate the sinking moon and Venus, or the evening star.¹ The three-day-old sickle of the waxing moon bathes the landscape and sky in an all-pervasive, rust-brown haze. Moonlight grazes the rocky uphill path that is lined by an evergreen fir tree, an uprooted dead oak, a large rock, and a broken-off branch. If to modern eyes these purposely arranged elements evoke theatrical props, to the deeply religious Friedrich they were emblems of the divine. Although the landscape is imaginary, it is based on precise studies after nature that the artist made over time in different regions of Germany. The moon, floating in the picture's center, is as precisely observed as the plants and rocks. Its faintly illuminated orb exhibits what astronomers describe as "earthshine" (see p. 14).

Pensive foreground figures were among Friedrich's favorite motifs. Usually seen from the back, they embody the Romantic sense of yearning. By placing them either in the center or as here, where the relatively large figures stand farther to the left, Friedrich encourages the viewer to identify with their angle of vision and to share their contemplative mood. Contemporary sources have identified the two men as the forty-five-year-old Friedrich and his talented colleague, the twenty-five-year-old August Heinrich (1794–1822).² Three years after this painting was made, Heinrich died of consumption in Innsbruck, on his way to Italy. Friedrich, on the right, wears a beret and a cape that, like Heinrich's cap and coat, conform to the Old German dress code that had been adopted in 1815 by radical German students. These students opposed the ultraconservative policies that were

being enforced in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. Ever since Napoléon's Grande Armée troops had entered Dresden in 1813 and Friedrich had had to move to a mountainous region southeast of the city to wait out the occupation, he had been fiercely patriotic. This explains why he ignored all decrees, including the royal 1819 decree, that forbade this kind of dress, and why he continued to show his figures in such costumes until his death in 1840.

In the vast literature on Friedrich, the fir tree, the gnarled oak, the setting moon, and the figures in Old German dress have been subjected to starkly different interpretations. These interpretations, with their Christian, pagan, nature-mystical, and political slants, have tended to overshadow the actual meaning of this picture. As proposed in the first essay of this catalogue (see pp. 9–22), we may simply relate its mood of piously shared contemplation to the fascination with the moon that is expressed in the poetry, literature, philosophy, and music of the time. The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) expressed this mood most evocatively in his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811–33), in a scene of two friends, albeit in a different setting, gazing at the moonlight: "Moonlight trembled over the broad river, while we, standing at the window, reveled in the abundant exchange that springs forth so richly during that splendid time when friendship is unfolding."³

In tune with this spirit of friendship, Friedrich gave the picture to his friend and upstairs neighbor, the Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl (1788–1857), in exchange for one of Dahl's works. It was a meaningful trade, as Dahl had also befriended Heinrich and, after the latter's



death, had bought his diary and many of his drawings and watercolors. Dahl kept the picture, of which Friedrich made two more versions (see cat. nos. 2, 3), until Friedrich's death, when he sold it to the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden (see p. 16). It is now one of the artist's best-known works.

1. In his forthcoming book *Caspar David Friedrich: Ästhetischer Protestantismus*, to be published by C. H. Beck (Munich) later in 2001, Werner Busch discusses the great importance that the Golden Section held in Friedrich's oeuvre, for giving both underlying structure and meaning to his works. For example, if a vertical line were drawn to divide this painting into two unequal parts according to the ratio of the Golden Section, and a horizontal line were drawn across the center of the painting, those two lines would intersect exactly at the

evening star, which is therefore revealed as the "secret aesthetic center of the picture." Furthermore, if a horizontal line were drawn to divide the painting into two unequal parts, again according to the Golden Section, that line would run right through the eyes of the man in the cape and beret, who is thus established as the focal point of the work. The author kindly sent me the manuscript pages containing his discussion of the Dresden picture. That the Golden Section applies to this version only, with its carefully aligned moon and evening star, is another argument in favor of its being the first one Friedrich painted.

2. See CDF 1973, cat. no. 261, pp. 356–57.
3. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, vol. 4 of *Collected Works*, ed. Thomas P. Saine and Jeffrey L. Sammons, trans. Robert R. Heitner (Princeton, 1994), p. 460; also cited in Klaus Lankheit, *Das Freundschaftsbild der Romantik* (Heidelberg, 1952), p. 104.



2. *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (*Mann und Frau in Betrachtung des Mondes*)

Ca. 1824

Oil on canvas, 13 3/8 × 17 3/8 in. (34 × 44 cm)

Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The image of two friends “captivated by the magic of a moonlit night”—to cite a famous line by the German poet and fabulist Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853)—coincided with the celebration of the moon in the poetry, literature, and philosophy of the time.¹ In music, Ludwig van Beethoven took up the theme in his “Moonlight Sonata” (1801), as did Frédéric Chopin in his twenty-one nocturnes (1827–46).

The present picture is the most different of Friedrich’s three variations on this famous motif. Perhaps the most obvious difference, revealed in the very title of the work, is that the protagonists are no longer two men but a man and a woman. The complicity between the figures in the other two paintings (cat. nos. 1, 3), made explicit through their postures and the closeness of their heads, does not exist here. Standing stiff and erect, the man and woman serve as purely pictorial devices for the Romantics’ sense of longing and yearning. As such, their identification as specific individuals would contribute little to the meaning of this painting, even though it has been suggested in the literature since 1922 that they represent Friedrich and his wife, Caroline, whom the artist had married in 1818.

Another shift from the Dresden version to this one—more drastic visually, in fact, than the genders of the figures—involves light and atmosphere. While in the 1819 painting a rust-brown haze envelops sky and landscape uniformly, in this work the rose-mauve light of early dusk creates a contrast between the dark foreground and the luminous expanse beyond it. In the “gothic” night sky of the Dresden picture, the waxing moon, with its bright halo, becomes a visual focal point. In the lighter sky of this picture, the moon receives much less prominence. The drama has shifted, instead,

to the oak: its dramatic silhouette, much denser network of branches, and writhing, moss-covered roots now dominate the picture. The tops of distant firs peek through the roots and above the rock, as in neither of the other two versions. The uphill path, barely discernible in the dark foreground, is wider and flatter and appears less steep than in the Dresden picture, and the evergreen fir on the left extends farther toward the couple, nearly engulfing them. The absence of the man’s walking stick, although his arm is raised in the same position as in the earlier version, seems to have been an oversight on Friedrich’s part. Since the stick is barely visible in the nocturnal Dresden picture, Friedrich might not have noticed it when copying his own work, and so forgot to include it here—an unusual omission by the otherwise observant artist.²

The curators in Berlin have recently advanced the date of this picture by some ten years, from approximately 1830–35 to approximately 1824.³ Börsch-Supan had assigned the former date because of the enamel-like paint surface, which he associated with the artist’s late work.⁴ Kasper Monrad proposes in his essay (see pp. 23–29) that the Danish writer and art critic Peder Hjort (1793–1871) might have inspired Friedrich to paint the present canvas. Monrad presents an intriguing theory, given that the whereabouts of the Berlin picture before 1922 are unknown and that none of the painter’s German contemporaries ever seems to have commented on it in writing; however, precise and convincing documentation for this theory must still be found.

1. Ludwig Tieck, *Schriften* (Berlin, 1828–54), vol. 1, p. 33.

2. See n. 39 on p. 22.

3. See n. 41 on p. 22.

4. CDF 1973, cat. no. 404, p. 433.

3. *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (*Zwei Männer in Betrachtung des Mondes*)

Ca. 1830

Oil on canvas, 13¾ × 17¼ in. (34.9 × 43.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Wrightsman Fund, 2000 (2000.51)

In this third variant of *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, Friedrich retained the luminosity of the second variant (cat. no. 2) yet reintroduced the two complicit male figures of the first one (cat. no. 1). Friedrich may have combined these two particular aspects of the earlier pictures because he found them more pleasing and thought they would make a more successful composition, or perhaps because they were specifically requested from the obliging artist.

This picture follows the Dresden version most closely, except for its transparent sky and slight nuances in the placement of its main features, such as the two men, the narrow path, the rock, and the broken-off branch (which is altogether missing from the Berlin picture). We know from infrared photographs that Friedrich did not bother with any underdrawing in this case, and he painted so fluidly that the forms are considerably less detailed than in the other two versions. Suffused with rose-mauve light, this version conveys the greatest sense of serenity.

The recently established provenance of the painting sheds interesting light as well on Friedrich's late career and on his Dresden milieu. By the late 1820s, Friedrich was losing favor with a public that preferred the faithfully rendered, naturalistic landscapes of the younger artists of the Düsseldorf School. His health suffered along with his finances, and from the late 1820s onward he was treated by Dr. Otto Friedrich Rosenberg (1770–1850). Rosenberg was married to Elizabeth Regina Hamann (1776–1838), the eldest daughter of the German philosopher and thinker Johann Georg

Hamann (1730–1788). As a physician during the Napoleonic Wars (1796–1815), Rosenberg had become so prosperous that he closed his medical practice in Königsberg and devoted himself solely to scholarly pursuits. In 1819, he had moved with his family to Dresden—then a center of the Romantic movement—to advance the artistic education of his six children. By 1822, Rosenberg was registered as a practicing doctor in Dresden, where he confined himself to the treatment of the poor. His direct link to the philosopher Hamann, whose ideas were much admired by the Romantics, made him welcome within Dresden's artistic circles. The poets Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) and Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter; 1763–1825) were received at his house (which was in the same district of Dresden as Friedrich's),¹ and Rosenberg frequented Tieck's famous literary salon.² One of the doctor's daughters, Theophila Minna Rosenberg (1800–1882), took drawing lessons from Friedrich, and she became an accomplished draftsman and painter, mostly of portraits and landscapes.

In lieu of a fee for treating the financially strapped Friedrich, Rosenberg received this painting, which then stayed with his descendants for one hundred and seventy years, until shortly before it entered the collection of the Metropolitan Museum.

1. I am grateful to Gerd Spitzer of the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, for this and much other information on Rosenberg.

2. See Wilhelm von Kugelgen, *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Mannes*, 6th ed. (Leipzig, 1959), p. 411. Kugelgen (1806–1883) was the son of the painter Gerhard von Kugelgen (1772–1820), a friend of Friedrich's.



4. *Study of Two Trees*
(*Zwei Baumstudien*)

April 25 and 26, 1809
Graphite on paper, 12½ × 10¼ in. (31.7 × 25.7 cm)
Inscribed and dated (upper right): *Neubrandenburg / den 25t April / Eiche*; (lower left): *den 26t April 1809*
Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden

The present sheet once belonged to a sketchbook, now dispersed, that the artist used during a trip to Neubrandenburg in the spring of 1809. This rather austere lake district lies about forty miles south of Friedrich's native city of Greifswald and eighty miles north of Berlin.

Friedrich never painted from nature, but he did compose his paintings and watercolors from drawings that he culled from his "motif stock." This stock consisted of many precise studies after nature—of clouds, rocks, plants, trees, boats, ruins, and monuments—that he had made during his various travels through Germany. He thought

nothing of combining motifs in one painting that had originated in completely different regions. Similarly, he often used motifs more than once. The present sheet is a typical example. Friedrich recast its two trees as the only two oaks among a sea of stumps in the 1811 painting *Winter Landscape* (Staatliches Museum Schwerin).¹ Subsequently, he relied on the same two studies for the large oak tree in all three variants of *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (see cat. nos. 1–3). Its hollowed-out, crooked trunk is based on the lower study on this sheet, while the branch that zigzags to the left across the entire width of the composition is based on the upper study, which is partly covered with leaves as in the final painting. He again used the lower study of the oak in two more paintings: *Ruins in Twilight* (1831)² and the unfinished *Forest, Late Autumn* (ca. 1835).³

Friedrich managed his motif stock frugally, as the repeated reuse of these studies over a period of more than twenty years demonstrates.

1. CDF 1973, cat. no. 193, p. 316.
2. CDF 1973, cat. no. 398, pp. 429–30.
3. CDF 1973, cat. no. 423, pp. 445–46.





CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

5. *Sisters on the Harbor-View Terrace (Harbor by Night)*
 (*Die Schwestern auf dem Söller am Hafen*
 [*Nächtlicher Hafen*])

Ca. 1820

Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (74 × 52 cm)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE 9774)

Friedrich astounded his friends when he married in January 1818, having been a confirmed bachelor until the age of forty-four. During that summer, Friedrich, his brother Christian, and their wives visited Greifswald, his birthplace, and then continued

along the Baltic coast, stopping at Wolgast, Stralsund, and the island of Rügen. Upon returning to Dresden, Friedrich evoked this voyage in his famous painting *On the Sailboat* of 1818–19 (see fig. 16 on p. 27) and possibly also in this image. Without even a sickle of a moon, this night scene evokes a stage set before the lights have been switched on and before the curtain has gone up.

The two young women standing on a terrace or bridge might be the artist's wife, Caroline Friedrich (née Bommer), and his sister-in-law. At night and in fog, they face a harbor ringed with buildings that are derived from those of Halle, a small town on the river Saale, some fifty miles northeast of Dresden. On the left rises the Marienkirche (the artist deleted the Baroque caps of the church's two

towers that are linked by a bridge) and on the far right the Red Tower, the proportions of which have been elongated.¹ A memorial to those drowned at sea, consisting of a cross with two mourning figures (see fig. 17), stands to the right of the figures, behind the balustrade that divides the composition into foreground and background. The overall setting, however, is inspired by the harbor of Stralsund, since Halle's harbor on the narrow river Saale would not have accommodated tall sailing ships.

The pairing of two unaccompanied women is as unique in the artist's oeuvre as is the urban setting, though probably tied to it, in that women of the time were unlikely to venture out alone into the rugged landscapes that Friedrich usually favored. The dark cityscape is composed entirely of Gothic architecture and the rigging and wooden masts of sailing ships, with all the elements echoing one another. By placing a Gothic church in a harbor of tall ships, Friedrich may have been suggesting that both are metaphors for refuge and protection. The piety of shared contemplation relates to his *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (cat. no. 2), in which the man and woman stand as stiffly erect beside each other as the two sisters-in-law do here. Their medieval silhouettes, in severe, high-necked, long-sleeved, long-trained formal Old German gowns, match the Gothic cityscape.

Within this night scene, Friedrich placed three subtle details of a lighter note. Weeds with tiny white blossoms strain through cracks in the stones in the center foreground. From the high collar of the woman on the right peek a bright white



Figure 17. Caspar David Friedrich. *Two Women on a Balcony*, ca. 1818. Pen and ink on tracing paper, 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 8 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (25.6 × 22.4 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

lining. And high above, close to the top edge of the canvas, shines Venus, or the evening star.

In 1820 the Russian grand duke Nikolai Pavlovich (1796–1855; Czar Nicholas I, r. 1825–55) and his wife, Alexandra Fyodorovna (the former Prussian princess Charlotte), made their first trip to Germany together. At that time, they visited Friedrich in Dresden and purchased this work, along with the above-mentioned *On the Sailboat*, right out of his studio.²

1. CDF 1973, cat. no. 263, p. 358.

2. Both pictures hung in the English Cottage, Nicholas I's summer residence at Peterhof (Petrodvorets), until 1945, when they were acquired by the Hermitage.

CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

6. *The Solitary Tree*

(*Der einsame Baum*)

1822

Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 28 in. (55 × 71 cm)

Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The high vantage point of this picture—as if the viewer were suspended in midair, somewhere near the upper half of the mighty oak—offers a magnificent panorama of the morning landscape.

By placing the ancient tree at center stage, Friedrich gives it a theatrical monumentality, even as it starts to wither at the top. The artist was not unaware that the oak was steeped in symbolism in Germany, having been featured in its mythology since ancient times and in its more recent national history. The tree's dramatic effect is heightened still more by the small figure of a pensive shepherd, who leans on its centuries-old trunk and watches over his flock, the latter seemingly reduced to the scale of pebbles.

Friedrich's relative empty landscapes fall into two main categories: either they serve as views



toward an infinity where light is the object to be contemplated or they serve as settings for more tangible objects of contemplation, such as ruins, churches, crosses, sailing ships, or, as here, trees.¹ The breathtakingly broad landscape of meadows unrolls back toward the distant mountains. Its vast expanse is dotted with ponds, groups of trees, and villages. The tips of Gothic towers in a distant town peek over the hilly terrain on the right.

In the distance of this imaginary view, to the left of the tree, rises the twin peak of Jeschken Mountain in the Riesengebirge, the range of high mountains between Silesia and Bohemia, southeast of Dresden. In July 1810, Friedrich and his friend Georg Friedrich Kersting (see p. 20), also a painter, had set off on foot to explore this region. The walking tour became a rich source of inspiration, and it supplied Friedrich with motifs for paintings and watercolors until the end of his life. Friedrich's sketchbook is now dispersed and some sheets are lost. The distant blue mountains are based on drawings he made during this trip, while the mighty oak is a composite of studies he made between 1806 and 1809 around Neubrandenburg (see cat. no. 4) and later in the Riesengebirge.

Although the sky is mainly overcast, the sun breaks through in places and alights here and there on the plain. Friedrich added subtle details that bring the landscape to life: white ducks float on one of the ponds, and white whiffs of smoke rise merrily from the villages—even from some spots in the distant mountains—suggesting the lighting of fireplaces at the beginning of the day.

This picture and its pendant, *Moonrise over the Sea* (cat. no. 7), both belonged to Konsul Johann Heinrich Wagener, the Berlin banker whose art collection would form the nucleus of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin when it was founded in 1861.² In 1822 Wagener commissioned two pictures representing the times of day, a morning and an evening landscape. On November 1 of that year, Friedrich informed Wagener that both paintings were already finished.

1. See Siegmur Holsten, "Friedrichs Bildthemen und die Tradition," in Werner Hoffmann, *Caspar David Friedrich 1774–1840*, exh. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle (Hamburg, 1974), p. 44.
2. The Nationalgalerie, founded in 1861, was built from 1865 on and opened in 1876. See CDF 1973, cat. no. 298, p. 378.



CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

7. *Moonrise over the Sea*
(*Mondaufgang am Meer*)

1822
Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 28 in. (55 × 71 cm)
Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Of the pendant paintings that Konsul Johann Heinrich Wagener, a Berlin banker, commissioned from Friedrich in 1822, this one served as “Evening” to *The Solitary Tree*’s “Morning” (see cat. no. 6).¹ Since the Baroque period, artists had chosen such cycles as the Four Seasons and the Times of Day to display their virtuosity in creating drama through landscape painting. The Romantic painters, however, made these themes their own by investing them with symbolism related to the passage of time from birth to death.

Friedrich drew his landscape motifs mainly from two regions in Germany: the mountains of the Elbsandsteingebirge, the Riesengebirge, and Bohemia, all southeast of Dresden; and his native northern Baltic coast, together with the island of

Rügen. While visiting these places, he drew precise studies, but he never painted from nature. The site shown here is probably the beach of Stubbenkammer, on the northeast coast of Rügen, which Friedrich, his brother Christian, and their wives had visited in the summer of 1818. This austere island, which, according to some visitors, offered little to the eye but much to the mind,² had been Friedrich’s favorite haunt since 1798–99. Fishermen feared for his life while watching him roam over the high chalk cliffs in a high wind.³ The artist’s painted seascapes always show calm waters, however, as in this scene, in which a partially hidden full moon illuminates an immense sky with shades of brilliant yellow, violet, and blue, while those hues are echoed more transparently on the sea below. Two sailboats approach the dark beach, one already lowering its sails.

Friedrich was very fond of painting figures on a rocky beach observing the moon setting or rising over the sea, but he usually reserved the motif for male figures. The theme first appears in a painting of 1818 in the Nationalgalerie, Berlin,⁴ and is repeated in several works, among them

Evening Landscape with Two Men (ca. 1830–35; see cat. no. 8).

The present painting is based on *Moonrise by the Sea* of 1821 (State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg), which is two-and-a-half times as large as this one.⁵ In that earlier work, the four figures—two women sitting on a boulder and two men standing farther out on the rocks—are smaller and do not extend over the horizon line. Here, Friedrich tightened the composition by placing a large boulder center stage. Similarly, by enlarging

the figures and moving them to the apex of the composition, he facilitated the viewer's vicarious contemplation of the moon.

1. CDF 1973, cat. no. 299, p. 379.
2. Werner Sumowski, *Caspar David Friedrich—Studien* (Wiesbaden, 1970), p. 25.
3. Sigrid Hinz, ed., *Caspar David Friedrich in Briefen und Bekenntnissen* (Berlin, 1968), p. 230.
4. CDF 1973, cat. no. 406, p. 434.
5. CDF 1973, cat. no. 281, p. 368.

CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

8. *Evening Landscape with Two Men* (*Abendlandschaft mit zwei Männern*)

Ca. 1830–35
Oil on canvas, 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (25 × 31 cm)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE 1005)

Few would have visited the sites depicted in Friedrich's paintings, except perhaps his fellow Romantic poets and painters. Barren landscapes such as this one were not popular destinations, and to see one represented with evident care and approbation was surprising at the time. Landscape paintings were supposed to serve as a substitute for travel by showing attractive and interesting scenes that one could enjoy at home.

After visiting the artist's studio in 1810, Johanna Schopenhauer, the mother of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, wrote to a friend: "The works of Friedrich differ greatly from those of other landscape painters in their motifs. The air—even though he paints it masterfully—takes up more than half of the space in most of his compositions. Middle- and background are often missing because his motifs don't require them. He likes to paint unfathomable plains. He is faithful to nature even in the smallest details and he has mastered his technique—in his oil paintings and sepia drawings—to perfection. His landscapes contain a melancholy, mysteriously religious meaning. They affect the heart more than the eye."¹

To ordinary viewers, Friedrich seemed to make his landscapes even more inaccessible by immersing them in twilight, fog, or, as here, impending darkness. It has been noted that the artist's unusual treatment of light was both personal and calculated (see p. 16). By enveloping his motifs in veils of obscurity, Friedrich practiced the "alienation effect" recommended by the German Romantic poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg; 1772–1801) and turned the familiar into the unfamiliar.



Figure 18. Caspar David Friedrich. *Two Men in Capes*, ca. 1815–18. Pen and ink on paper, 3 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 3 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (9.9 × 7.8 cm). Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



cat. no. 8

This little painting presents yet another of Friedrich's favorite motifs. Under a sky still mauve and orange from sunset, an "unfathomable plain" watered by several arms of a river leading to a distant sea stretches toward infinity. Two men in capes and berets admire the scene. As are so many of the figures in Friedrich's paintings, they are dressed in the Old German style that had been revived by radical German students in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and the ensuing ultraconservative reaction of Metternich and the Congress of Vienna. Deliberately ignoring the 1819 royal decree that forbade this dress, the staunchly patriotic Friedrich continued to show his figures in medieval costume until the end of his life.

In traditional landscape paintings, small figures were often included as picturesque *staffage* or as a measure of scale. Here, the larger and completely motionless figures have become an allegory of yearning and of communion with nature, which the Romantics saw as a manifestation of the spiritual. The two men here were copied from a much earlier pen-and-ink drawing (fig. 18).

Until it entered a private collection in 1917, this small painting hung in one of the imperial residences in Saint Petersburg. The Hermitage acquired it in 1966.

1. Johanna Schopenhauer, "Über Gerhard von Kugelgen und Friedrich in Dresden: Zwei Briefe, mitgeteilt von einer Kunstfreundin" (1810); cited in CDF 1973, p. 78. Translation by Sabine Rewald.



CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

9. *Moonlit Landscape* (*Mondscheinlandschaft*)

Ca. 1830–35

Watercolor on paper, with circle cut out, mounted on a separate piece of paper; 9 ⁷/₈ × 14 ³/₈ in. (23.2 × 36.5 cm)

Thaw Collection, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (1996.150)

The full moon is the focal point of this drawing, which was meant to be lit from behind.¹ Friedrich cut the round shape of the moon out of the watercolor and then glued unpainted paper behind the sheet. The light of a candle filtered through this hole would have created the illusion of a brightly shining moon.

Even without the aid of a candle, cool moonlight plays on the pond in the foreground and on the white trunk of the birch tree. The other trees' silhouettes evoke dark filigree against the green-blue sky, which is traced by golden cloud drifts. The statue, with its twinkling crown, has been



Figure 19. Caspar David Friedrich.
Tree Studies, 1801. Graphite and wash on paper, 15 × 9 ¹/₄ in. (38.2 × 23.6 cm).
Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo

called a *Mater dolorosa*; yet the object at her bosom might be a cross instead of a sword.²

The leftmost tree and the fence are based on a pencil study of October 23, 1801, positioned on the upper half of a sheet in the Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo (fig. 19). It has therefore been suggested that the watercolor might be of an earlier date. However, the reuse of a drawing, even after more than thirty years, as a source for a painting or watercolor was not uncommon in Friedrich's oeuvre.

In his paintings, Friedrich usually kept the full moon partially veiled with clouds. Not so in this watercolor—here, he “waited” for an opening in the clouds to appear so he could place the moon on a dark ground for greater pictorial effectiveness.

1. CDF 1973, cat. no. 440, p. 453.

2. See P[eter] D[reyer], “Moonlit Landscape,” in *The Thaw Collection: Master Drawings and New Acquisitions*, exh. cat., The Pierpont Morgan Library (New York, 1994), cat. no. 52, p. 81.



CARL GUSTAV CARUS
GERMAN (LEIPZIG 1789–1869 DRESDEN)

10. *View of Dresden at Sunset*
(*Blick auf Dresden bei Sonnenuntergang*)

1822
Oil on canvas, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 12 in. (22 × 30.5 cm)
Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz

Carl Gustav Carus settled in Dresden in 1814, when he was offered the directorship of the Dresden Academy for Surgery and Medicine, along with a professorship in gynecology. From then on, his patients, medical students, and paintbrushes made competing claims on his time.

Carus was a highly organized man. His many activities required a strict daily routine, which he described to a friend in 1818: “I am content and well, and get up every day at 5 A.M. to work on gynecological matters, read the necessary papers, reflect on my mathematically structured physiology, give lectures and, if the bright idea of a painting enters my mind, I slip into the room next door—rebuilt as a studio—light the fire, and have all the things necessary for a painting already set out. I lock the room and await inspiration. At night I usually don’t eat, but after the family has

eaten, I join the others and we read a little after the children have been put to bed. At 9:30 P.M. I go to bed, read still a little and then quickly and happily go to sleep.”¹

Carus met Caspar David Friedrich in 1817, and their close friendship lasted a decade. Among many other things, Friedrich advised Carus, who was fifteen years younger, on painting technique. One day, Friedrich noticed on his friend’s easel a moonlit landscape that he thought lacked the “illusion of moonlight.”² He advised Carus to apply a dark glaze over the entire composition—except for the moon and the area around it—with the glaze growing darker toward the picture’s edges.

Friedrich also influenced Carus’s subject matter. During their years of friendship, ruins, cemeteries, tombs, and other symbols of transcendence appeared regularly in the doctor’s work. Moreover, Carus’s painted views of Dresden often coincide with those by Friedrich dating from the years 1820 to 1830; all were possibly inspired by their shared excursions into the outskirts of the city.

In Friedrich’s more abstract rendering of a similar view of Dresden (fig. 20), the focus is on the effects of light in the vast sky, and the foreground zone remains starkly bare. The reality-wedded Carus dotted the foreground with plants and flowers, yet



he idealized the skyline of Dresden under a sky colored from orange to mauve by a vanished sun. By exaggerating the height of the Gothic church towers so that they dwarf the famous domed church, the Frauenkirche, he changed the city's actual Baroque character into a medieval one.³

1. Carus's letter of December 23, 1818, to his friend Johann Gottlob Regis is cited in Marianne Prause, *Carl Gustav Carus: Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1968), p. 12. Translation by Sabine Rewald.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
3. Hans Joachim Neidhardt, *Dresden wie es Maler sahen* (Leipzig, 1983), p. 76.



Figure 20. Caspar David Friedrich. *The Evening Star (View of Dresden)*, ca. 1820–30. Oil on canvas, 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (32.7 × 45 cm). Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurter Goethe-Museum, Frankfurt am Main



CARL GUSTAV CARUS

11. *A Landscape at Sunset*

(*Eine Landschaft bei Sonnenuntergang*)

Ca. 1830
Oil on cardboard, $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in. (13.3 × 19 cm)
Private collection

Carus demonstrated his great diversity by publishing two very different books in the year 1831. One was *Lectures on Psychology*, and the other was his now famous *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting*.¹

Ever since moving to Dresden in 1814, Carus had jotted down his observations on nature in a sort of “painter’s diary,” which formed the basis for his meditations on landscape in *Nine Letters*. While the first five letters interpret nature as an unfathomable vessel of the divine, the last four insist that nature can be made accessible through scientific study. What had brought about Carus’s major shift of direction? The first five letters reflect his ardent admiration for his old friend Caspar David Friedrich, whereas the next four reflect his immense respect for a new friend, the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Carus had met Goethe in Weimar in 1821, and their meeting had proved especially decisive for Carus. It initiated a correspondence on matters scientific that were close to the hearts of both the doctor/painter and the poet/scientist. Carus’s work on the theory of landscape had come to a major halt after the completion of his fifth letter in February 1822. Then he had read Goethe’s poems and treatise inspired by Luke Howard’s classification scheme for clouds.² In Goethe’s treatise Carus saw “science expressed as poetry.” With the poet’s vivid example before him, Carus felt he could now reconcile scientific documentation with painting and art.³

Meanwhile, Goethe’s interest in clouds had led him to ask Friedrich, in 1816, if he would consider providing some illustrations for the above-mentioned treatise. Friedrich had refused indignantly. To the painter, the reducing of clouds to a rigid meteorological classification was tantamount to an overthrow of landscape art.

With Carus’s newly gained objectivity toward landscape, he distanced himself from his friend Friedrich, and they became estranged. Carus’s greater faithfulness to nature would be detrimental

to much of his later work, though not to this small painting. Here, he approaches the spontaneity and naturalism of his other Dresden painter friend, Johan Christian Dahl, to whose work he now became more responsive. These gables and towers of houses among trees near the river Elbe have all the immediacy of a study from nature, as do the wispy streaks of gray clouds brushed across the transparent orange sky.

1. A letter he had received from Goethe in 1822 served as the volume's introduction.
2. Luke Howard had begun his work on the systematic classification of cloud formations in 1803, and it had been translated from English into German in 1815.
3. See Marianne Prause, *Carl Gustav Carus: Leben und Werk* (Berlin, 1968), p. 45.



JOHAN CHRISTIAN DAHL
NORWEGIAN (BERGEN 1788–1857 DRESDEN)

12. *A Cloud and Landscape Study by Moonlight*

1822

Oil on paper mounted on thick paper, $6\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{5}{16}$ in.
(15.8 × 18.6 cm)

Signed and dated (lower left): 1822 / JDahl

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum Purchase,
Magnin Endowment Income Fund (1992.128)

Johan Christian Dahl caused a sensation when he first exhibited one of his imaginary northern landscapes at the Dresden Academy in 1819. The work was praised for its drama, immediacy, and truth to natural detail. Dahl had arrived in Dresden in 1818, having concluded six years of study at the Copenhagen Academy. Among the Dresden artists, Dahl felt the greatest kinship to Caspar David Friedrich, who helped him find lodgings, showed him where



to buy painting supplies, and gave him a tour of the town. Dahl's temperament found little to inspire it in the gentle landscape surrounding Dresden. He longed for the "untamed" wilderness of his native Norway, and that country's motifs would dominate his paintings throughout his lifelong exile.

During his stay in Rome of 1820–21, Dahl—who surprised his German painter colleagues by producing somber northern scenes even in the sunny south—also made extensive studies after nature, a practice he would continue throughout his life. At the end of the nineteenth century, these spontaneous, painterly studies came to be more admired than his fully elaborated, finished landscapes. Dahl, however, regarded them strictly as study material for private use in his studio.

Perhaps in compensation for the relatively subdued Dresden landscape, studies of the sky assumed an important place in Dahl's oeuvre upon his return from Italy in 1821. After moving onto the upper

floor of Friedrich's house at An der Elbe 33, facing the river Elbe, he created a large group of magnificent cloud studies directly from his studio window. Many of these include the moon and its reflection on the water at night. A rapid eye and quick hand were needed to catch the ever-changing forms and colors, as in this earlier study of a full moon peeking through an opening in the clouds.¹ The speed of the clouds is indicated by the already disintegrating halo of the moon, the bright light of which has created a palette ranging from deep purplish gray and transparent mauve to rusty orange and white.

The drama is confined to the sky. The rock and spruce trees at the lower left and the low ridge in the background serve merely as reminders of the ground below.

1. Marie Lødrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 2, cat. no. 398, p. 142.

JOHAN CHRISTIAN DAHL

13. *View from Vækero near Christiania*

1827

Oil on canvas, 23 ¹/₁₆ × 38 in. (60.5 × 96.5 cm)

Signed and dated (lower right): *JDahl Januar 1827*

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Patrons'

Permanent Fund (1999.99.1)

Norway's rocky, windswept coasts, wild seas, and foaming waterfalls continued to haunt Dahl after he moved to Dresden in 1818. Throughout his life, he painted dramatic northern scenes (with or without shipwrecks) that were in stark contrast to his serene views of Dresden and the river Elbe by moonlight (see cat. no. 15).

Dahl finally returned to Norway in April 1826 for a six-month visit, his first after an absence of fifteen years. The Norwegian trip—which was followed by four subsequent ones—inspired him to make hundreds of drawings, a motif stock that would last him until the end of his life. A drawing of a tall sailing ship and fishing nets dating from

June 25, 1826 (fig. 21), just two days after his arrival at Christiania (present-day Oslo), served as the study for this canvas that Dahl painted upon his return to Dresden in 1827.¹

The Romantic mood of this painting might be compared to the work of his friend and upstairs neighbor, Caspar David Friedrich. During the 1820s certain superficial similarities can be found in the two artists' work. From Friedrich, Dahl adopted the mysterious, mood-enhancing effects of dusk, twilight, and fog. And there is no doubt that it was the older artist's influence that inspired Dahl to place two figures, seen from the back, at the water's edge. However, Dahl's basic conception of landscape would always remain essentially different. Friedrich's landscapes, which might be called devotional images in disguise, were usually subjected to a severe underlying order, while Dahl's were still rooted in a Baroque tradition without preconceived geometry.

Friedrich's larger figures, as allegories for Romantic yearning, usually compel the viewer to identify with their angle of vision and thereby



Figure 21. Johan Christian Dahl. *Vækerø, June 25, 1826*. Graphite and wash on paper, $4\frac{1}{8} \times 6\frac{3}{8}$ in. (10.4 × 16.7 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo

to share in their contemplation of nature. The smaller, decorative figures in this picture of Dahl's instead provide a sense of scale and add a note of cozy domesticity. To judge by their rounded silhouettes, the couple are perhaps no longer young. Out on their customary evening walk through Vækerø—a small town near Christiania—they linger, as perhaps always at this spot, to admire the moonlight reflected in the water. As if in a magical mirror, the clouds, tinted pink by the vanished



Figure 22. Johan Christian Dahl. *Study of Two Figures*, Feb. 11, 1827. Graphite and wash on paper, $6\frac{11}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$ in. (17 × 15.5 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo

sun, mingle with the hard, silvery shine of the rising moon.

1. Marie Lødrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 2, cat. no. 542, p. 182.

14. *Mother and Child by the Sea*

1830

Oil on canvas, $6\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in. (16 \times 20.6 cm)

Signed and dated (lower center):

JDahl 1830

Private collection

As we have seen in the previous entry, Dahl returned to Dresden with a large cache of drawings from his first, long visit to his native Norway in 1826. Among them was one of an anchor (fig. 23) that served as the study for the one depicted in this small painting, where it is turned to the right. Abandoned by ships on the beach, these large anchors—symbols of hope in Christian parable—resemble skeletons in a desert. Dahl's friend Caspar David Friedrich was much taken by the evocative shapes of these anchors and often depicted them in his own paintings.

In a slightly larger, very similar nocturnal picture by Friedrich of 1826, entitled *Evening on the Baltic Sea*¹—for which the artist used one of Dahl's studies of an anchor—a sailboat approaches a rocky coast. The beach, except for the gigantic anchor, is desolate, and the image reverberates with loneliness. This work of Dahl's, though it includes similar elements, points to the poignant differences between the two artists. The lively silhouettes of a woman and small child, seen against the reflected



light of the full moon partly visible in the distance, add a hopeful mood to what would otherwise also be a melancholy image. The two are waving to an approaching boat, seemingly in anticipation of a long-awaited reunion with a loved one. That interpretation was intended by the artist, as he explained in a letter to the painting's first owner: the picture "shows a coast in moonlight where a woman and her child are waiting for an approaching boat bearing a close relation."²

It is interesting to note that in his study for the two figures (fig. 24), because the time is day, the mother and child are waving to a departing boat.

1. CDF 1973, cat. no. 350, p. 406.

2. Marie Lødrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 2, cat. no. 641, p. 213.



Figure 23. Johan Christian Dahl. *Study of an Anchor*, 1826. Graphite and wash on paper, $6\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in. (17.1 \times 21.7 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo



Figure 24. Johan Christian Dahl. *Woman and Child on the Beach*, April 1827. Graphite and wash on paper, $2\frac{5}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$ in. (6.8 \times 11 cm). Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo

15. *Dresden by Moonlight*

1850

Oil on canvas, 13 ¼ × 18 ¾ in. (33.7 × 47.3 cm)

Signed and dated (lower right, on side of woodpile):

JDahl / 1850

Private collection

Dahl never tired of depicting Dresden's evocative riverbank by moonlight. This is the very last in a series of forty views of the Elbe that he made over almost three decades, beginning in about 1823¹—the year he had moved into a house at An der Elbe 33, facing the river. The foreground of this work is about three hundred meters away from this very house, which Dahl shared with the painter Caspar David Friedrich until 1839, when Dahl moved to An der Elbe 9. Both houses were part of the row of private buildings on the far left, partly hidden by the trees.

Dahl has distorted the course of the Elbe, actually gently curved, so that it appears to move sharply toward the right at almost a right angle. The cupola of Dresden's landmark church, the Frauenkirche, dominates the skyline, followed to its right by the buildings of the Brühlsche

Terrace, the Hausmann Tower of Dresden Castle, and the steeple of the Catholic church. The arches of a famous bridge, the Augustus-Brücke, link the Old City (Altstadt) on the left with the New City (Neustadt), beyond the right edge of the image. It is curious to compare this view of Dresden with the idealized view by Carl Gustav Carus (see cat. no. 10), in which the cupola of the Frauenkirche is dwarfed by the exaggerated towers of the city's Gothic churches.

The logs stacked in heaps, or randomly lying about, identify the foreground as the Böhmischer Holz-Platz, an entrepôt for lumber delivered by boats on the river Elbe.² Locals gathered here in the evening, as do the two women on the far left and the two top-hatted gents by the shore.

This small painting has all the spontaneity of the artist's studies of clouds. As in the example on page 47 (cat. no. 12), here the moon peeks momentarily through an opening in the rapidly moving clouds. The finely observed, already elongated halo is just about to disintegrate.

1. Marie Lødrup Bang, *Johan Christian Dahl 1788–1857: Life and Works* (Oslo, 1987), vol. 2, cat. no. 1106, p. 331.

2. Gerd Spitzer kindly checked city maps of Dresden dated 1835–52 for the name and location of this area.





CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH GILLE
GERMAN (BALLENSTEDT 1805–1899 DRESDEN)

16. *Moonlight Study*
(*Mondscheinstudie*)

1831

Oil on paper mounted on cardboard, $8\frac{3}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{16}$ in. (22 × 33.5 cm)

Inscribed and dated (lower left): *Drs am 25. July 1831*

Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Dresden

The painter Christian Friedrich Gille remained unknown during a life that spanned the entire nineteenth century. The autobiographies of his contemporaries Carl Gustav Carus and Ludwig Richter (1803–1884) do not mention his name. Gille supported himself as a commercial lithographer and etcher because he had little success with his large, rather labored, idealized landscapes, which he nonetheless persisted in painting until the end of his life. His reputation today, however, rests on the hundreds of small oil studies that were found in his studio after his death. Gille himself had never considered these works important

enough to exhibit or sell. He died in poverty at the age of ninety-four, without family or heirs.

According to his biographer Gerd Spitzer, Gille created these oil studies from about the late 1820s to about 1870–80.¹ He was probably influenced by the Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl in adopting this method of jotting down his impressions of nature. Dahl had been made a member of the Dresden Academy in 1824, and in that capacity he had taken on students, Gille among them. Dahl encouraged his students to make studies after nature, an approach still neglected by the academy itself.

In his small oil studies, Gille became the chronicler of Dresden's idyllic and temperate surroundings, which he never left during his long life. These works represented for him a continuous, private dialogue with nature. In them he was able to express his ever-spontaneous and direct responses to the most unassuming, ordinary motifs: a patch of meadow, a close-up of a tree, unruly weeds, clouds above the barest hint of some rooftops. Just as for the short-lived August Heinrich before him (see cat. no. 17), for Gille the search for scenic or dramatic effects was completely unknown.



This study appears to be the only night scene with a moon in his oeuvre. Although the motif is a Romantic one, Gille, unlike Friedrich but more like Dahl, focuses on the effects of moonlight on the various cloud formations and on the sky, which ranges from bright copper to dark bronze. The moon, bright as a penny, hangs in the exact center of the composition.

1. See Gerd Spitzer, *Christian Friedrich Gille: 1805–1899* (Dresden, 1994), p. 18. This is the first and only publication devoted to this forgotten artist and contains a summary catalogue of the extant works.



AUGUST HEINRICH

GERMAN (DRESDEN 1794–1822 INNSBRUCK)

17. *Large Tree before a Landscape*

(*Grosser Baum vor einer Landschaft*)

1821

Watercolor over graphite on paper, $9\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23.6 × 20.7 cm)

Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

While August Heinrich's brief life makes him seem the very embodiment of the Romantic artist, his art differed from that of his contemporaries. Whereas the latter charged their landscapes with allegory or symbolism, Heinrich examined nature with the clear-eyed objectivity of a botanist.¹

Little is known of Heinrich's life, which was apparently devoted only to work. We do know that his career lasted just from 1812 until 1822, during which decade he lived in Vienna, Salzburg, and Dresden. In 1820, when Heinrich submitted a watercolor in application for a traveling stipend to Italy at the annual exhibition at the Dresden Academy, he listed himself in the catalogue as a "pupil of Friedrich," and he has been referred to ever since as Caspar David Friedrich's pupil. However, while artistic and friendly relations did exist between the two men—Friedrich owned twelve watercolors and drawings by Heinrich—this identification is not correct.² Friedrich had

reservations about Heinrich's work, praising its truthfulness yet finding in its objectivity toward nature a disappointing lack of poetry. Still, during Heinrich's two-year stay in Dresden, from 1818 to 1820, Friedrich included the image of his young colleague in the famous first version of his painting *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (cat. no. 1), now in the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Dresden.

From his student days at the Vienna Academy (1810–12) on, Heinrich had devoted himself to landscape, and it would remain his sole subject matter. His motifs often seem arbitrarily chosen, with little regard for conventional beauty or dramatic effect. Indeed, Heinrich was oblivious to so-called scenic views because his interests lay elsewhere. He was obsessed by nature itself, studied it with unparalleled powers of observation, and rendered it with remarkable draftsmanship. In this watercolor, Heinrich's sole interest was in capturing the effects of sunlight and shade on the foliage of a majestic tree, which blocks the view of the landscape beyond.³

Only a small percentage of Heinrich's work has survived—approximately one hundred and ten drawings and watercolors, as well as four small oil paintings. The largest group, consisting of thirty-eight drawings and watercolors, belongs to the Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo. It was a gift from the Norwegian painter Johan Christian Dahl, who admired Heinrich's work and had sketched with



cat. no. 17

him on the outskirts of Dresden. After Heinrich died in 1822, Dahl bought the works directly from the artist's estate, together with his diary. No work by Heinrich exists in this country.

1. See Sabine Rewald, "August Heinrich: Poet of Loschwitz Cemetery," *Master Drawings* 39, no. 2 (summer 2001), p. 143.
2. See Gode Krämer, *Der Maler und Zeichner August Heinrich: Dresden 1794–1822 Innsbruck* (Karlsruhe, 1979), p. 28. Krämer's is the only existing book about the artist.
3. *Ibid.*, cat. no. 16, pp. 137–38; p. 252.



MARTINUS RØRBYE

DANISH (DRAMMEN [NORWAY] 1803–
1848 COPENHAGEN)

18. *View from the Citadel Ramparts in Copenhagen by Moonlight*

Ca. 1839

Oil on canvas, 11 3/8 × 9 3/8 in. (29 × 24.3 cm)

Signed and dated (far left, on post): MR [in monogram]

1839[?]

Private collection

Danish painters, unlike their Romantic contemporaries in Germany, preferred to present the light of day in their pictures. They shunned strong emotional content in their luminous interiors and landscapes in favor of a certain soberness and clarity. It is not surprising, therefore, that moonlit scenes were rare during the so-called golden age of Danish painting, which lasted from about 1800 to 1850. The term "golden" applies to the country's art only, not to its truly lamentable economic situation. Having been allied with Napoléon until his, and

France's, defeat in 1815, Denmark suffered the consequences of this alliance: it lost its fleet; its capital, Copenhagen, was destroyed by bombardment; and its economy was ruined.

The Norwegian-born Martinus Rørbye moved to Denmark at a young age. Best known for his genre paintings and architectural renderings, he emulated the realistic approach of his teacher, Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783–1853). This painting depicts a spot near the Citadel, just north of Copenhagen's old city, overlooking the mouth of the harbor. The Citadel had been a very important part of Copenhagen's defense, protecting the heart of the city from attack,¹ but by about 1839, the date of the picture, there were no longer any external threats to Denmark. Thus, the three figures—a soldier with plumed hat, bayonet, and sword and two sailors in large canvas hats—can afford to interrupt their duties momentarily. They are

admiring a moon that is hidden from us behind the tall guard kiosk; we can perceive it only indirectly, through its reflection on clouds and water. With their various comfortable postures, these Danish moonwatchers evoke spectators enjoying an outdoor event, in stark contrast to the piously contemplative figures placed in German Romantic moonlight scenes.

In 1828, some ten years earlier, on nearly the same spot, Rørbye had depicted two similarly garbed soldiers standing rooted next to a cannon and admiring a full moon.² He must have often observed similar scenes.

1. I am grateful to Kasper Monrad for identifying the location depicted in this picture.

2. See Af Dyveke Helsted et al., *Martinus Rørbye 1803–1848*, exh. cat., Thorvaldsens Museum (Copenhagen, 1981), cat. no. 18, p. 44. Kasper Monrad kindly supplied this reference.



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